**April 1, 2025| Vol. 54**

**DELAWARE DIVISION FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED NEWSLETTER**

**Providing educational, vocational, and technical support to empower and foster independence for Delawareans with visual impairments.**

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AI-generated content may be incorrect.

**April is Sports Eye Safety Month**

Annually, approximately 100,000 individuals sustain eye injuries related to sports activities, with around 13,500 of these cases leading to irreversible vision impairment. In recognition of Sports Eye Safety Month this April, the American Academy of Ophthalmology emphasizes to athletes worldwide that most sports-related eye injuries can be prevented by using appropriate protective gear.

**April is Parkinson’s Awareness Month**

Parkinson’s Awareness Month serves as a platform to enhance understanding of the condition and its symptoms, while also providing support to those affected. Parkinson’s disease is a chronic disorder characterized by the degeneration of the central nervous system, impacting the motor system. Common motor symptoms associated with this disease include tremors, stiffness, and rigidity.

**April 2- Autism Awareness Day:** A day focused on enhancing awareness and advocating for the rights of individuals with autism. Although the event was originally intended to foster awareness, numerous advocates now stress the importance of acceptance and inclusion over mere acknowledgment.

**April 30- International Guide Dog Day:** This day holds special significance for DVI! We dedicate this day to honor the vital role of guide dogs and their contributions, as they provide unwavering assistance, protection, and companionship to individuals with visual impairments, disabilities, and special needs.

**Regina Spence- Client Success Story**

3/14/25

****It was 1997 when Regina Spence lost her vision. Prior to this she was in the military and traveled the world, all while being a single mother. Most notably, she was even one of the first woman to be on a military ship. “I mean I did a lot. I was very independent.” states Regina. This level of independence was no longer possible when she became visually impaired. Regina soon descended into a state of depression. She was living in an area that left her feeling unsafe and did not feel comfortable even leaving her house after dark. She was left feeling lonely and isolated.

It was at this time when Regina became determined to find a career that aligned with her skill set and offered her some independence. Thankfully, she heard about an opening in the Business Enterprise Program at DVI. Regina had known about the program for a long time and first heard about it while she was living in Florida. She was very interested in working in vending machines but there was sadly no availability and Regina believed that to be the end of it.

Fortunately, that did not turn out to be the case. She was talking with a friend who is also visually impaired, when they mentioned there was an opening in BEP in Delaware. “When I first heard it became open, I jumped on it.” Says Regina. “I thought that would help give me some independence and show myself that I was able to be better off than the financial situation I was living in. And I could be on my own. You know, I didn’t have to struggle through more than I could really do.” She knew that program would allow to prove this to herself, and she was determined to excel in it.

This proved to be a significant understatement for Regina. She not only thrived in the program but also became one of the quickest individuals to complete training. This is no small feat. Kat, an affiliate of DVI, emphasizes just how impressive that is. “I have heard from many people that it is not an easy program to finish so quickly,” Kat stressed. “She does not let anything stop her!”

Regina’s work ethic and tenacity speaks for itself. She explains her process. “So, when I started the program, I didn’t really have anything that I had to do, so my focus was primarily just going through it.” Regina comments. This program was her main focus every day, and she gave it her all. Regina had a routine, and it went as follows. She would profusely study all of the materials for each test, take the test quickly as she could and then request the next one. This routine would continue until she successfully completed the program in record time. “The independence that this program offered me made me focus on it really hard daily,” she notes.

This sense of dedication and commitment has followed Regina throughout her entire life, and she thinks back to a time she truly needed it; after she became visually impaired. Regina was determined to continue working at the job she was at before she lost her sight, cooking. And while she persevered in this job for a long time, it was not the job for her anymore. She was consistently getting migraines and had an employer that wanted her to produce at the same level as her sighted peers. Regina was constantly stressed before work and sometimes would have to call out. She worked hard and still got the job done but she finally got to a place where she knew her job was not worth it. She had had enough and deadpanned “I can’t do this.”

And now – thanks to the Business Enterprise Program – she is at a job she is truly comfortable in. Regina has been employed at the Smyrna Rest Stop working in vending machines since September 2025. “It is such a better fit for me,” she comments. She happily talks about how much less stress and pressure she feels working this job. Her responsibilities include managing the vending machines and addressing any problems that may arise. While it took Regina a long time to leave her previous job, when she finally did, she could not be more grateful. Regina now genuinely values her position and receives support from management that recognizes and respects her disability. "I struggled for a long time with the decision to leave my previous job," she reflects. However, it is clear that her departure was the best choice for her.

Like any other job, working at Smyrna Rest Stop has its ups and downs and its challenges but having a supportive staff and leadership that understands the realities of a disability makes a world of difference. Regina expresses contentment with her current situation and takes pride in the dedication and perseverance she has demonstrated to reach this point. "I consider that to be success," she remarks. "I tackled the challenges because it was necessary, faced difficulties, and yet I still achieved success."

**How travelers with disabilities are exploring the world — and loving the detours**

By: Zach Wichter

March 30, 2025

Paul Choquette loves going to Switzerland.

“They’ve done a very good job of taking an old country and turning it into a place that is accessible,” he told USA TODAY. Choquette, 60, became paralyzed as a result of a car accident in his childhood and relies on a wheelchair to get around.

He said he greatly enjoys traveling and that peoples’ accessibility needs should not hold them back from exploring the world. In fact, he said, seeing how accommodations are made in other places can be part of the fun.

“Sometimes the way you go about doing things is different because the environment is different, you have to adapt to the environment,” he said. “That’s one of the wonderful things about travel, you get to try doing things differently.”

Choquette acknowledged that it can be a little more complicated for people with disabilities to travel, especially on long international trips. But, he said, they and their companions can take advantage of a growing number of resources to have a great time just about anywhere.

Here are four things he and other disabled travelers and experts suggest doing to optimize an accessible trip.

1. **Plan Ahead**

All travel requires some level of planning, but for those with special accessibility needs, doing some groundwork in advance goes a long way to making the whole trip go off smoothly.

“There’s tremendous anxiety around accessible travel,” Miriam Eljas Goldman, founder of [accessibleGO](https://accessiblego.com/), an online booking platform that specializes in adaptive travel experiences, told USA TODAY. “I would say planning is critical. You don’t just book and hope for the best. You want to make sure you’ve looked into all the aspects.”

Eljas Goldman said her company works with clients to make sure their trips have all the necessary accommodations. The company will even do things like call the hotel and request photographic proof of how high the bed is to make sure a wheelchair user will be able to self-transfer if required.

“You must get things verified; otherwise, you might have a problem,” she said.

Matthew Brandley is a wheelchair user and said he makes sure there are accessible accommodations for him wherever he goes.

“Anything that my wife and I do, if we go on our own, anywhere we go to has to be wheelchair accessible,” Brandley, 60, told USA TODAY. “When my wife and I go to the beach, when we stay at a house with her mom and dad and the extended family, it has to be accessible.”

Full article: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/2025/03/30/international-accessible-travel-tips/80872496007/>

**What to Check Out**

**PiccyBot App:** Use PiccyBot to convert photos and videos into spoken descriptions, pose questions in the text field, and zoom in for specific details. PiccyBot answers any image or video related query with a clear calm voice.

**App**: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/piccybot/id6476859317>

**Website:** <https://www.piccybot.com/>

**The Aira App: On Demand, Expert Assistance**

With the Aira app, people with vision loss connect to vetted, live, expertly trained assistants. Using the camera on your smartphone, they walk you through whatever task you’re struggling to see your way through. Hadley presents a conversation with the Experts audio podcast.

Audio Podcast Link: <https://hadleyhelps.org/podcasts/hadley-presents-conversation-experts/aira-app-demand-expert-assistance?_q=fzx8uyc6xj>

**EVENTS**

**Kent County ILS Client Meet & Greet**

**Title**: The Connection Between Eye Health and Mental Health

**Date**: Wednesday, April 16th from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

**Location**: Milford Conference Room, 18 N Walnut Street, Miford, DE

Please RSVP by calling 302-255-9800.

**BlindSight DE Winterthur Trip**

Participate in BlindSight's sensory tour at the stunning Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library.

**Date**: Wednesday, April 30 from 9:30 am to 2:00 pm

Please check out the flyer below for full details.



**Summer Exploration Program**

Join the Food Bank of Delaware this summer! Through diverse activities, students will enhance essential workplace skills such as teamwork, responsibility, following instructions, and time management. Exposure to different environments- including kitchens, pantries, and farms- will broaden their understanding of potentail career pathways.

**Qualifications**: High School stidents 16-22 years old with a documented disability.

Learn more: <http://www.fbd.org/preets/>

**Contact**:

Marie Frazier

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Phone: 302-217-6393

**The Ride Ahead: Finding Power in Our Community**

**Description**: Join [the Center for Disabilities Studies](https://www.cds.udel.edu/) and the [Access:Ability Scholars](https://www.udel.edu/apply/undergraduate-admissions/enrichment-opportunities/access-ability-scholars/) program at the University of Delaware for a screening of [The Ride Ahead](https://www.rideaheadfilm.com/), a groundbreaking documentary that follows Samuel Habib as he navigates the transition to adulthood while living with a disability. Afterwards, stay for a Q&A with filmmakers Dan and Sam Habib to discuss the making of the film, the importance of authentic disability representation, and the broader movement for disability justice. As part of this special event, we will also celebrate the achievements of our graduating Access:Ability Scholars, recognizing their commitment to advancing accessibility and inclusion.

**Date**: Monday, April 14, 2025

**Time**: 4:00 – 6:30 p.m. Doors open at 3:00 p.m.

**Where**: In person at the STAR Tower Audion — 100 Discovery Boulevard, Newark, DE 19713 — and virtually via Zoom.

**REGISTRATION INFORMATION**

Registration is required and must be completed by **Monday**, **April 7, 2025**. To learn more and register for this hybrid event, visit: [cds.udel.edu/therideahead](https://www.cds.udel.edu/therideahead)

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