



# InSight

Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment, Inc.

## Ready To Work!

Census data estimates that 70% of working-age adults who are blind are not working. By providing people who are blind with valuable employment opportunities and the tools they need to succeed, AVRE hopes to change that statistic for the better. AVRE's Certified Employment and Career Specialist, Michelle Murray, works alongside Vision Rehabilitation staff to identify work experiences or internships to help individuals meet their career goals.

Michelle notes that "consumers meet with me and we come up with a list of what they'd like to do." After the initial meeting, Michelle works with consumers one-on-one to discuss interview preparation, resume building, and skill development. When she is not working directly with consumers, Michelle attends job fairs, trying to generate partnerships with area businesses and advocating for the employment of people who are blind or visually impaired.

According to Michelle, "a lot of what I'm doing is education. When people hear vision impairment, they freeze. I explain that they can do things everyone else does, just a bit differently."



Above: Hannah White behind the scenes at the Bundy Museum's radio station, WBDY, 99.5 FM.

This past summer, Michelle worked with college student Hannah White to set up a work experience. Because of Hannah's interest in radio and broadcasting, she was excited to volunteer for the Bundy Museum in Binghamton and their community radio station, WBDY 99.5 FM - "I like music and I like talking, so anything that combines music and talking I am 100% interested in."

AVRE's employment program placed eight people in job and work experiences in 2018. In honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), we hope to raise awareness about the value of inclusion in the workplace. By employing individuals with disabilities, we hope to demonstrate for employers the capabilities people who are blind have when given the appropriate tools for success.

### *Our Mission:*

***"To create opportunities for success and independence with people who are blind or visually impaired."***

# 2019 Charles Costello Memorial Scholarship Recipient

In 2002, Mrs. Beverly Costello and AVRE established the Charles V. Costello Memorial Scholarship Program to honor the memory and contributions of her husband, Charles. A long-time board member of AVRE, Mr. Costello was a community leader who encountered vision loss later in life.

Each year, AVRE endeavors to award one or more scholarships to legally blind or visually impaired post-high school students. The intent is to offer one or more scholarships of at least \$500.

This year, the Charles V. Costello Memorial Scholarship has been awarded to Ms. Christina Carden of Cortland, NY. Ms. Carden is attending Ithaca College to obtain a Master's Degree in Occupational Therapy. She will be recognized as a recipient of the scholarship at our Awards and Recognition banquet in December.

**Congratulations Christina!**

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## AVRE Earns ISO 9001:2015 Certification

After 15 months of planning and implementation, AVRE earned the ISO 9001:2015 certification. ISO stands for International Standards Organization. ISO 9001 is the international standard that specifies requirements for a quality management system (QMS). Companies use the standard to demonstrate that they consistently provide products and services that meet customer and regulatory requirements. Based on a number of quality management principles, the standard focuses on strong customer satisfaction, the motivation and implication of top management, the process approach, and continual process improvement.

AVRE's Process Improvement Manager, John Ellzey, worked with AM&T consultant, Bob Mann, to document current processes and create a system to monitor production accountability and quality assurance. Quality management is a dynamic standard. John will continue to work with Bob to improve and document AVRE's processes. They will also work on implementing a risk assessment function into our QMS.

The ISO 9001:2015 certification is critical when AVRE is competing for federal contracts or doing business with any company that has stringent product requirements and customer service expectations. Adhering to these principles ensures that AVRE's processes are efficient and designed to minimize waste, ultimately saving the company money. Our goal is to improve the customer experience by consistently providing quality products and adhering to strict on time delivery requirements!



Congratulations, John, and thanks for your commitment to getting AVRE ISO 9001:2015 certified!

# Mark Foster Recognized as NYSPSP's 2019 Employee of the Year

Each year, the New York State Preferred Source Program for People Who are Blind (NYSPSP) asks each NYS agency to nominate a direct labor employee as their employee of the year. The employee must be blind or visually impaired and work on a NYS product line or service. These employees are then considered for NYSPSP's state-wide Employee of the Year award. This year, we nominated Mark Foster!

Mark has been with AVRE since 2012. He is a Level 1 Machine Operator, but he is able to perform nearly every operation across all departments! Mark is especially proficient working on NYSPSP projects. Our Production

Manager, Luigi DiRusso, relies on Mark to train new and current employees on various tasks. He is respected by his co-workers and is always ready to take on a challenge.



Above: Luigi DiRusso, Cassandra Gamble, Mark Foster, Ken Fernald and guide dog Winnie, and Charles Gardner at the NYSPSP Awards luncheon.

The staff and Board of Directors of NYSPSP were so impressed with Mark's personal and work history, they chose him as NYSPSP's 2019 Employee of the Year! Mark was celebrated at a May luncheon in Albany. He attended the luncheon with other nominees, staff, and guests from NYS agencies, including his girlfriend, Sandy, and co-workers from AVRE. Mark is certainly an asset to AVRE. We are glad he is on our team!

Congratulations, Mark!

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## Welcome Board Members!

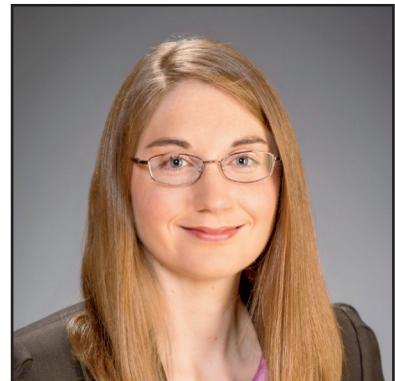
### Maria Wilson

Maria Wilson is a Licensed Speech-Language Pathologist who is currently in private practice. She has over 30 years of experience working with individuals with communication disorders, including children and adults who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing. She is a Past President and current member of the Binghamton Lions Club.



### Karen McMullen

Karen J. McMullen is a partner at the law firm of Levene Gouldin & Thompson, LLP and practices elder and special needs law, trusts and estates, residential real estate, and municipal law. Karen graduated from Maine-Endwell High School and serves on the Board of M-E Dollars for Scholars. She is also a member of Endwell Rotary and is currently Chair of the Endwell Rotary Foundation Board.



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**AVRE** serves visually impaired individuals of all ages who live in the New York counties of Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Otsego, Tioga, Tompkins and Schuyler.

AVRE is an Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Employer.

If you would like more information about AVRE and its services, please feel free to contact us.



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