

## AVRE Employee Recognition Banquet

Every year we look forward to coming together to honor staff at our Employee Awards and Recognition Banquet. In December, we celebrated the exceptional work and dedication put in by employees and business partners who have contributed toward AVRE's mission to provide vision rehabilitation services and employment opportunities to people who are blind.



Above: Ken Fernald, Board member Steve Wayman, and Luigi DiRusso congratulate Amy J. Lateer Award recipient Joe Edwards.

Manufacturing employee Joe Edwards received the Amy J. Lateer Award for his consistent positive attitude and willingness to help others. This award was established in memory of Amy Lateer, an AVRE employee who always went above and beyond to help her co-workers. Joe exemplifies what it means to be a team player and always puts his best foot forward.

Manufacturing employee Patti Casciotti was announced as the 2020 New York State Preferred Source Program for People who are Blind (NYSPSP) Employee of the Year for her outstanding work on the products and custom kits we sell into the New York State government marketplace. Patti and her guests will join nominees

from ten other NYSPSP-affiliated agencies for an awards luncheon in Albany on March 12th. "I've never thought of myself as disabled," said Patti. "I've learned that if you work hard enough, you will get to where you want to be."

Andy Rhykerd from Advantage Military and Al Vergara from Goody Products, Inc. were presented with the Community Partner Award for their unwavering commitment to helping create jobs for people who are blind. Goody has partnered with AVRE for 20 years as the sole supplier for the hair accessories we repackage for US military commissaries around the world. Goody represents one of our longest and strongest business relationships, working with us to grow and sustain employment opportunities.

AVRE welcomed Mark Lucas, Executive Director for the United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA), as the night's guest speaker. Mark has dedicated his life to advocating for people who are blind or visually impaired in the world of sport. Guests enjoyed hearing Mark's motivational outlook and the accomplishments he has made along the way - including once serving as a guide runner for Ken Fernald. We were honored to have Mark share his inspirational story with us and we thank everyone who joined us for a night of commemoration!

### *Our Mission:*

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

## 2019 Year in Review, by AVRE President/CEO, Ken Fernald

Over 94 years ago, AVRE was formed with a focus on creating employment opportunities for individuals who are blind in Binghamton. With the start of a new decade, I think about our founders and what they would think of AVRE now, and what we have become as an organization. I think they would be excited about our modern facilities (still located in downtown Binghamton), the fact we offer a range of vision rehabilitation services across nine New York counties, and the growth in employment opportunities for people who are blind or visually impaired at all levels of our organization.

Last year our Business Division continued to break records in employment, production levels, and sales. Our team worked hard to develop and start-up a new production line to supply heavy duty tarps designed to cover military vehicles. This new product line helps us to further diversify our product offering, our customer base, and the types of jobs available for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Our Quality Management System was certified to meet ISO 9001:2015 standards, assuring the highest quality for our customers. We also focused on improving our on-time delivery rating and are now exceeding 98% on a consistent basis.

In May 2019, we held our 2nd Annual Dining in the Dark fundraiser. Around 200 guests donned a sleep shade, received instruction from our vision rehabilitation professionals, and joined us for a dinner in the dark. The funds raised from this event support the services our Health and Rehabilitation Services professionals deliver throughout our communities. More importantly, guests left with a better understanding and appreciation for some of the challenges faced by people who are blind and how AVRE can assist people to overcome those challenges.

In 2019, AVRE was ranked as #4 in the Top 50 Best Nonprofits to Work For in the nation. This is significant in many ways, but it speaks volumes about the workplace culture and overall quality work environment we have all created. Thank you to our employees, our Boards of Directors, and leadership team for making AVRE such an awesome place for each of us to do our work. In the new decade, I look forward to new opportunities, getting past the challenges, and celebrating our successes.



### Sharing Snowflakes

AVRE employees are always willing to assist a friend in need. When our friends at Visions Federal Credit Union asked for our help with a project, we were happy to assist.

“We received a call asking if we sold custom-sized paper,” said Customer Relations Specialist Stephen Comency. “Visions needed a few reams of square 8.5” x 8.5” paper for a specific project.”

The paper was going to school children to make paper snowflakes. To produce the size requested, we used a guillotine to cut the 8.5” x 11” paper we manufacture into squares. Thanks to the extra effort by our staff, a group of happy children joyfully expressed their creativity through snowflake art!

Follow us on social media!

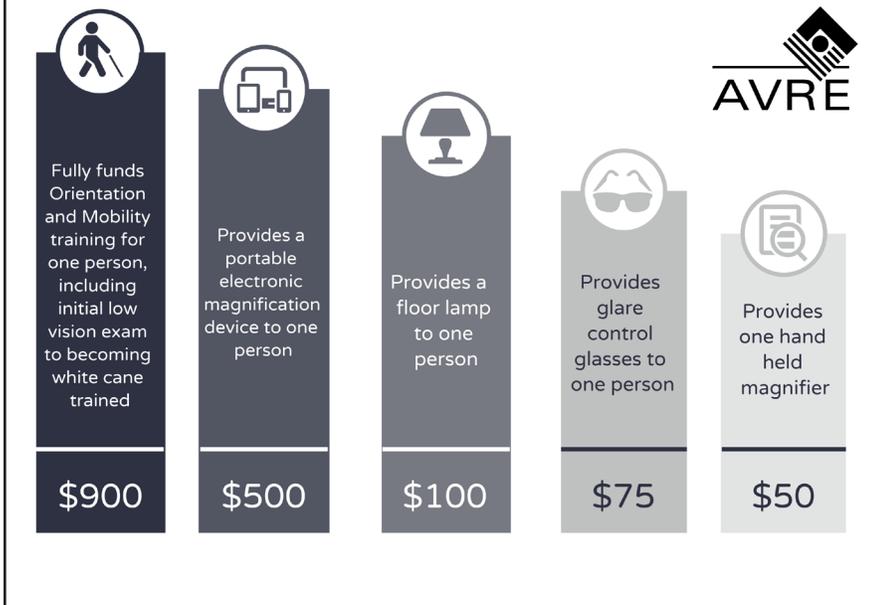


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## Your gift directly supports vision services for people who are blind & visually impaired



## Supporting Our Mission

As AVRE moves into its 94th year, one thing remains the same – the dedication to our mission and the communities we serve. We remain committed to working with AVRE consumers to maintain their independence at home, work, and in their community by providing:

- individualized case management
- low vision exams and functional vision assessments
- vision rehabilitation services
- orientation and mobility (white cane) training
- low vision aids and adaptive devices
- employment and job skills

Because of the generosity of our donors, we are able to provide these services and devices at little to no cost to the consumer. Thank you for helping us make a difference throughout the years. In 2020, we ask that you join other donors and consider AVRE when planning your annual giving. We all benefit when we work to ensure more successes in the communities where we live and work!

If you have any questions regarding making a gift, or including AVRE in your planned giving, or how you can learn more, call Jaclyn Boushie-Bombard at (607) 724-2428.

## Save the Date!

Don't forget to save the dates for our 2020 fundraisers!

Our 3rd Annual Dining in the Dark will be held on Thursday, May 7th at the Holiday Inn in Binghamton. Our Health and Rehabilitation staff will provide guests with instruction as they navigate a three-course meal under blindfold.

We'll host our Nine at Night golf tournament on Friday, September 11th at Chenango Commons in Binghamton. Glow sticks will line the course as golfers use the light of the moon to play at night.

Interested in sponsoring one of our events? Call and ask for Jaclyn Boushie-Bombard at extension 125. For ticket and event information, go to [www.avreus.org](http://www.avreus.org).



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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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