



# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT





The mission of **Helen Keller Services (HKS)** is to enable individuals who are blind, visually impaired, deaf-blind or have combined hearing and vision loss to live, work and thrive in the communities of their choice. HKS offers services and programs through two divisions: Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNC) and Helen Keller Services for the Blind (HKSB).



**Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNC)** is the only national Comprehensive Vocational and Rehabilitation Program that provides information, referral, support and training exclusively to youths and adults who have a combined hearing and vision loss, their families and the professionals who work with them.

**Helen Keller Services for the Blind (HKSB)** is a comprehensive rehabilitation program serving individuals of all ages who are blind or visually impaired and who may have additional disabilities, living in the New York metropolitan area.



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## ABOUT DR. SUSAN RUZENSKI

DR. SUSAN RUZENSKI was appointed acting chief executive officer of Helen Keller Services in October, 2020. She began her career with the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults in 1979 and has held many supervisory positions including 23 years as the director of Direct Services. Most recently, she was the executive director of HKNC, a position she had held since October 2014. In 2019, she received her Doctor of Education in Adult Learning and Leadership from Columbia University, Teacher's College, New York.

## From the Desk of Dr. Susan Ruzenski, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Helen Keller Services

How do you tell the story of 2020? We have experienced a year like no other and as I look back there are stories of resilience, innovative collaboration, ingenuity and connection that will remain in our hearts and minds.

In March of 2020, the unthinkable happened!

Helen Keller Services (HKS) with its two divisions, Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNC) and Helen Keller Services for the Blind (HKSB), officially closed its doors for the first time in 127 years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Overnight our staff and the youths and adults we work with each day, who are blind, have low vision or are deaf-blind, were facing uncertainty and an unfamiliar reality.

Our first and foremost concern was the safety of the consumers we serve. In order to continue to provide them with the quality and diversity of services HKS is well known for across the country, we had to quickly pivot to a new virtual dimension.

It was a real learning curve but HKS' dedicated staff members never missed a beat and quickly began conducting remote classes, support groups and opportunities to connect and dialogue with peers. Our thinking and practices also transformed with a greater openness to possibilities and, yes, to experiencing the silver linings of COVID-19 pandemic.

With today's technology, training continued to be conducted utilizing refreshable braille displays, video phones, Zoom, screen-readers, VoiceOver and other software programs. Consumers continued to learn skills in mobility, braille, independent living and so much more. They participated in peer learning sessions on subjects such as safety during COVID-19, banking, budgeting and advocacy as well as support groups that helped them stay connected at a time when people were social distancing. Vocational training for teens and adults continued and, for some, led to successful employment despite the pandemic. The preschool at the Children's Learning Center welcomed new students in the fall, Camp Helen Keller was conducted during



the summer using Zoom and our national services continued to expand allowing us to reach more people on a local level throughout the country. From early intervention for children to senior citizen programs we remained committed to people and responsive to them at every stage of their lives.

Assessment in the core areas of employment services, adaptive technology, communication, independent living and mobility with the clinical areas of audiology, low vision and mental health counseling were offered remotely. Our virtual services brought us right into the homes and communities of the consumers! These were the natural training environments where new skills and strategies could be practiced.

In this Annual Report, you will read some of the remarkable activities, achievements and success stories that have taken place at HKNC and HKSB.

They say there are many ways to find a silver lining in life. Silver linings bring positivity, fresh perspectives, movement and new experiences. What we have discovered through these unprecedented times is that, through the dedication, support and know-how of our staff, board members, supporters and community partners, silver linings are viable. I am most grateful to each and every member of this great organization for their commitment and contribution especially during these difficult times.

As acting CEO of HKS, I am committed to fostering new opportunities of growth and synergy in the coming year within the organization and among community partners.

Dr. Sue Ruzenski

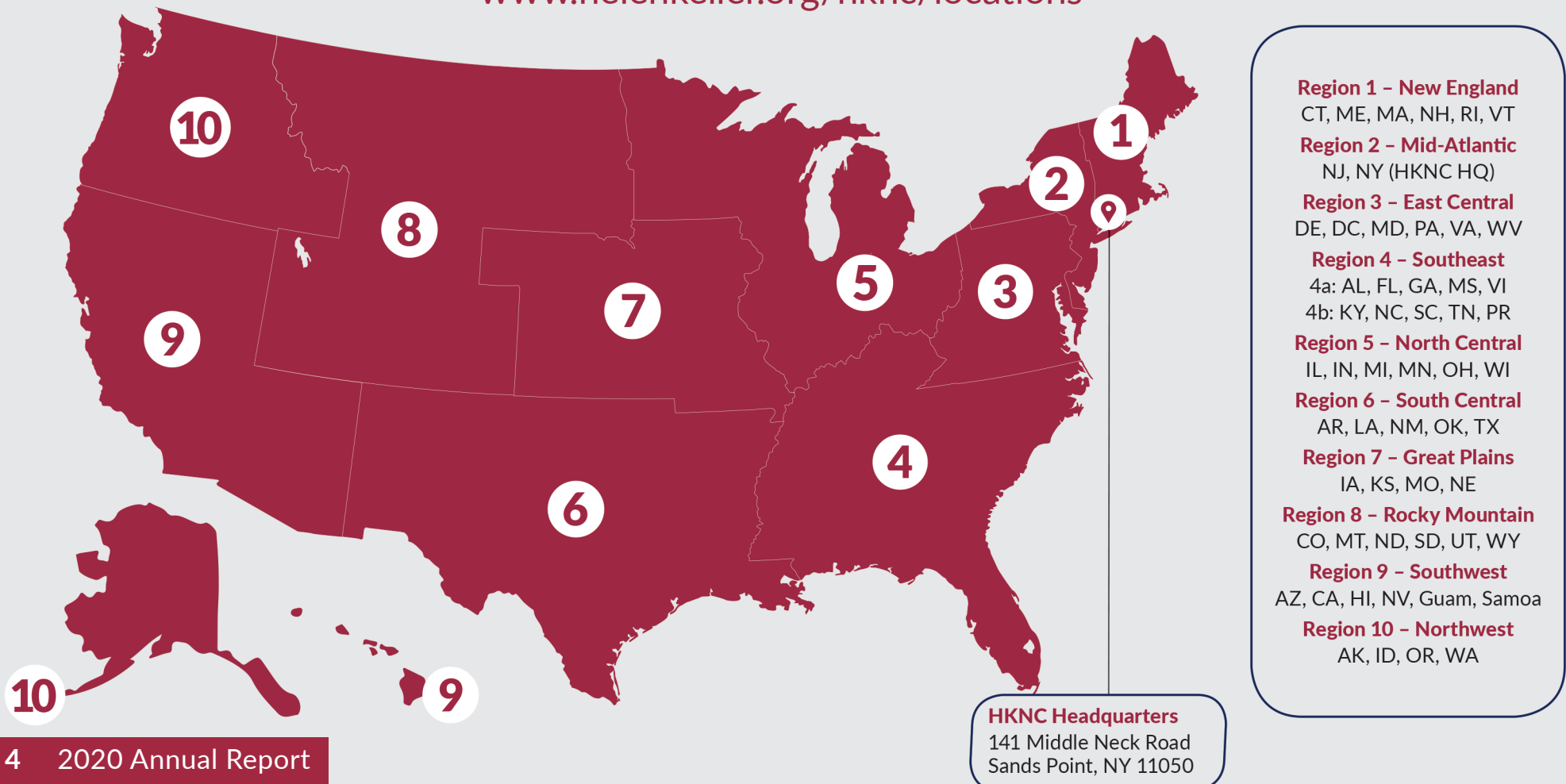




# HKNC's Reach

In addition to the residential training facility in Sands Point, HKNC also offers services through its 10 regional offices across the country. These offices serve as the gateway to all that HKNC has to offer — consultation, advocacy, assessment, training, referrals and more throughout the country!

Learn more about HKNC's regional offices by visiting:  
[www.helenkeller.org/hknc/locations](http://www.helenkeller.org/hknc/locations)





The Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNC) is the only national Comprehensive and Vocational Rehabilitation Program exclusively for youths and adults with a combined hearing and vision loss.

Note: Since the onset of COVID-19, the programs and services listed below are being conducted remotely.

The residential-based training program, located at its Long Island headquarters in Sands Point, NY, provides vocational training and assistance to consumers in locating employment, housing and community resources in their community of choice. HKNC also provides training in assistive technology, communication, orientation and mobility, independent living and apartment living experiences. On-campus support services include audiology, low vision, case management, creative arts, medical, interpreting and information services. The adult learning environment promotes peer-to-peer learning and self-advocacy skills to maximize learning and enhance self-empowerment.

Field Services, located throughout the United States, include 10 regional offices with 11 regional representatives and one associate, 10 deaf-blind specialists, 3 youth services coordinators and 4 staff members in the California Community Services Program.

### *The regional offices offer:*

- Job development
- Consumer advocacy
- Consultation and technical assistance to schools and agencies
- Assistance in developing local services
- Consumer support as needed
- Information and referral
- Coordination of referrals to HKNC
- Professional development and in-service training
- Public education and awareness
- Maintenance of a National Registry of Persons Who Are Deaf-Blind
- National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program

### *Additional programs include:*

- Three different **Summer Youth Programs** offer transition age youth opportunities to explore college and career goals and to gain self-awareness, confidence and skills through experiential learning and group discussion with peers.
- A **Senior Adult Program** provides consultation, training and technical assistance to seniors 55 years and older who want to maintain their independence.
- Two **Community Services Programs (CSP)** offer job development and coaching, training in skills of daily living, low vision and orientation and mobility in the greater metropolitan areas of New York City and San Diego, CA.
- The **Information, Research and Professional Development (IRPD)** department develops deaf-blind specific training materials and curricula for professionals and produces fully accessible online courses. They also disseminate information to consumers, families and professionals through seminars, online newsletters and social media.
- The **Deaf-Blind Immersion Experience (DBIE)** is a 5-day program for individuals who are deaf-blind with intellectual disabilities and their home support team.
- The **Professional Learning and Leadership Institute (PLLI)** offers 3-6 month paid internships for deaf-blind individuals who want to work in the field of vocational rehabilitation.

***HKNC's mission is to enable each person who is deaf-blind to live, work and thrive in the community of their choice.***



# WHEN THE WORLD STOOD STILL

On March 17, 2020, HKNC officially closed its campus in Sands Point, NY, because of COVID-19.

In the beginning, it was hard to wrap our heads around the ramifications of the pandemic but, in spite of the circumstances, HKNC's dedicated staff never missed a beat. Assessments in the core areas of employment services, adaptive technology, communication, independent living and mobility with the clinical areas of audiology, low vision and mental health counseling became offered remotely. Individual online training classes and peer collaborative virtual learning groups started, free on-line classes for professionals were offered and media posts were updated to stay connected with all of our friends across the country. The home and the community have proven to be natural training environments where strategies can be practiced.

HKNC continues to be a leader in the field of virtual vocational rehabilitation services for and among individuals who are deaf-blind. It may not be "business as usual" but HKNC continues to provide programs and services to people who are deaf-blind in new and innovative ways. We hesitate to use a cliché here – but what the heck, HKNC STRONG!

*HKNC Training Building in Sands Point, NY*





# WHAT'S NEW AT HKNC

- A series of 4 – 8 weeks peer collaborative virtual learning groups are offered free of charge for anyone age 18 or older with both hearing and vision loss. These support groups are conducted using Zoom videoconferencing, phone or video. Depending on registration, classes offered include such topics as banking and budgeting, virtual cooking, braille skills and resources, mobility, technology, useful apps, emergency and disaster strategies, Internet safety, nutrition, living independently and more. In addition advocacy and support groups are offered facilitated by instructors who are deaf-blind.
- A 10-week Deaf-Blind College Prep Program is offered to deaf-blind high school graduates who are planning to attend college. The program is designed for those who would like some additional preparation addressing their individualized needs and the more general challenges a deaf-blind student might face in their post-secondary educational journey. The students have an opportunity to participate in a simulated college seminar course while simultaneously receiving academic instruction in small groups and one-on-one. Additionally, students can participate in the Success at College peer learning group which covers other non-academic college readiness topics such as navigating campus life and managing social media.

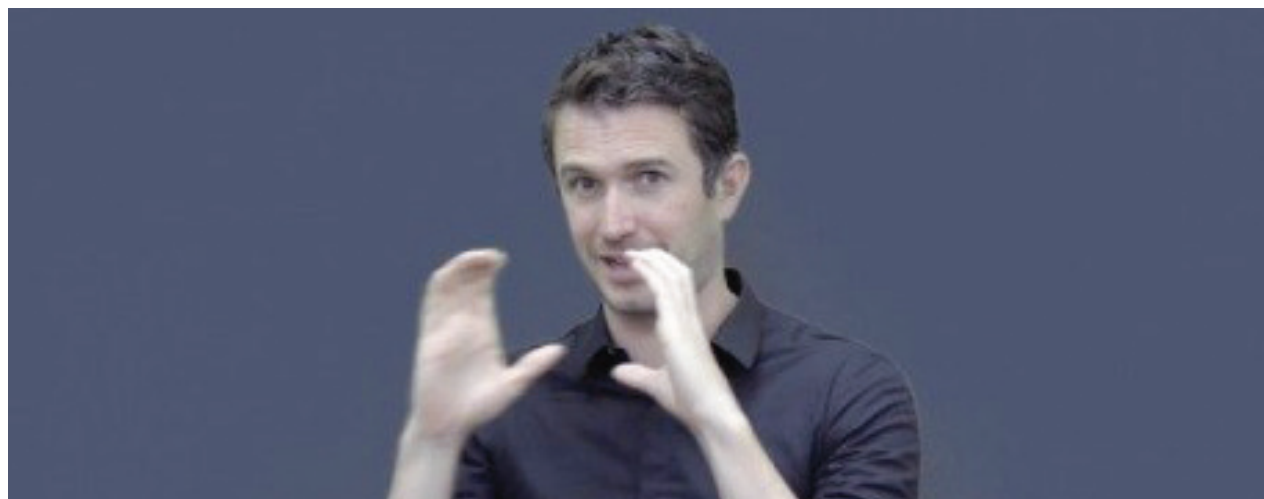
*Students and staff meet for a remote Zoom class*





# NEW ON HKNC'S WEBSITE

- “Zoom Video-Conferencing: Accessibility Practices for People who are Deaf-Blind” provides facilitators and participants with information on making video conferencing accessible for people who are deaf-blind.
- HKNC's website now has fully accessible videos summarizing each of the Titles of the Americans With Disabilities Act.
- The Professional Learning Department offers a variety of multi-media classes for professionals working with deaf-blind individuals. Eight of these modules are now available in Spanish.
- The latest course to be added, “Audiological Considerations for Those with Dual Sensory Loss,” is geared towards professionals who support and work with individuals who have a combined hearing and vision loss. The content can also be beneficial for deaf-blind consumers as well as their family and friends.



*HKNC's videos feature interpreting and captioning*



*HKNC'S audiologist adjusts a student's hearing aid*

# TWO NEW GRANTS

HKNC is most grateful to be awarded two major grants this past year.

**\*The Consumer Technology Association Foundation** awarded HKNC a grant to provide the following:

- To create an online course focused on the technology training needs of senior adults who are deaf-blind. It will be targeted to the professionals who work directly with these constituents
- To conduct outreach to senior adults who are deaf-blind and the service providers who work with them to ensure access to training and resources.

The Information Research and Professional Development Department and HKNC Senior Adult Services coordinator will work together to create these trainings and resources for seniors 55 and better with combined hearing and vision loss.

**\*The Illinois Department of Human Services - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation** has approved a grant that will fund an advisory board of six deaf-blind individuals and HKNC staff to study ways that a Support Service Provider (SSP) program can be established and to facilitate a pilot SSP program in the Chicago area. This pilot program will support the long-term goal of instituting a statewide SSP program.

HKNC is also very appreciative of grants from the Sidney and Judith Kranes Charitable Trust, the Peter and Jeri Dejana Foundation and the Esther and Harold Mertz Foundation which assisted us in supporting our remote/virtual comprehensive rehabilitation and vocational programs during the stay-at-home mandate.





# KEVIN'S STORY GOES INTO SYNDICATION

Kevin Tong, 39 years old, is living his dream. After attending HKNC in the spring of 2016, Kevin went home to California to look for work, hoping to get a job in food services and one day becoming a chef. With the help of the staff in HKNC's California Community Services Program, he finally landed a job as an entry level cook with Sodexo, the world's largest food and maintenance services company, at their facility in Camp Pendleton.

Kevin was recently transferred to the Marine Corps Recruit Depot and received a promotion to a Level 2 cook. Joe Melillo, HKNC's national employment and business relations specialist said, "Kevin received valuable experience in cook preparation through the Vocational Services Program at the Center." After a television interview on ABC News 10 in San Diego, his story went into syndication and has spread to many different venues.



# STILL WORKING IN SPITE OF A PANDEMIC

*Ryan at work in the new office in his home*



Former HKNC student, Ryan Vlazny, was recruited from college to work at Vanguard Group in Pennsylvania. He came to the Center in 2019 for training to upgrade his braille and technology skills before returning to his job as a Vanguard developer. When the pandemic hit, Vanguard closed their offices and initially told their employees that they would not open until at least early January 2021. Ryan decided it was best to move back in with his family in Florida.

His dad said, “Ryan misses going to his office and interacting with everyone. We are grateful that he went to HKNC when he did. His life revolves around braille. He not only is able to continue his Vanguard Developer job, but this week was able to make reservations with Delta Airlines for a trip to Dallas including picking our seats. It’s really remarkable that that he is accomplishing so much. HKNC did a wonderful job helping Ryan transition to his new world. He loves his Focus 80 and Focus14 braille displays.”



# HKSB's Reach

Serving the five boroughs of New York City and Long Island, HKSB operates training facilities in Brooklyn, Hempstead and Islandia, and offers low vision services in Sands Point. Field services expand HKSB's reach, bringing resources to your neighborhood!

Visit [www.helenkeller.org](http://www.helenkeller.org) to learn more about our locations.



Established in 1893 as the Industrial Home for the Blind, Helen Keller Services for the Blind (HKSBS) enables individuals who are blind or visually impaired and reside in the New York metropolitan area to live, work and thrive in the communities of their choice. Through office locations in Brooklyn, Hempstead and Islandia, in addition to community-based field services, the HKSBS team works with consumers to achieve their educational, vocational and/or personal goals so they can live as independently as possible. Programs at HKSBS include the following:

### *General Services*

- **Low Vision Services** – Optometrists provide eye examinations and teach consumers how to maximize any residual vision by using specialized lighting, lenses and magnifiers at Low Vision Centers in Brooklyn, Hempstead, Islandia and Sands Point.
- **Employment Services** – A full spectrum of employment services for working-age youth and adults, including vocational assessment and guidance, job-skills training, work experience internships and job placement.
- **Assistive Technology Centers** – Offers assessment and training in the use of adaptive computer equipment and accessible technologies, including one-on-one and group courses, which enables individuals to perform their job and/or academic studies independently.
- **Orientation & Mobility** – Instruction in safe and independent travel with the help of tools such as a white cane, guide dogs and/or portable devices.
- **Social Casework Services** – Certified social workers provide one-on-one counseling and other resources to help consumers adjust to blindness or vision loss.
- **Vision Rehabilitation Training** – Instruction in daily living skills (cooking, medication management, budgeting, etc.) to assist consumers to live independently.

### *Specialized Programs*

- **Services for Adults with Developmental Disabilities** – Includes a Day Habilitation Program, Supported Employment, Community Habilitation, a community residence located in Wantagh, NY, and a respite service for caregivers.
- **Adaptive Living Program** – Provides rehabilitation teaching, instruction in daily living skills, orientation and mobility training, social casework services and low vision services to older adults ages 55 and older that help them regain their self-sufficiency and live safely in their homes.

### *Services for Children and Young Adults*

- **Children's Learning Center** – Provides educational, therapeutic and early intervention services for young children, birth to age five, who are blind and/or have multiple disabilities, including a full-day pre-school with a parent resource center for families and/or caregivers.
- **Summer Camps** – Includes Camp Helen Keller, a five-week summer day camp that offers physical activities and socialization opportunities for children and youth ages 4-16, and the Summer Adolescent Vocational Experience, a sleep-away camp for children and youth ages 10-15 focused on vocational field trips and daily living skills instruction.
- **Pre-vocational Training** – A five-day job exploration program for students ages 10-14.
- **Orientation to Work** – A twelve-week summer program that prepares students ages 15-21 for the world of work through part-time internships.

***HKSBS's mission is to enable people with vision loss and those who are blind to live, work and thrive in the community of their choice.***



# HKSB's Rehabilitation and Vocational Programs

Like many other organizations in the New York City area, HKSB had to change gears in March due to the mandatory stay-at-home order established due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, HKSB switched its rehabilitation and vocational programs to operate virtually and provided remote assessment, instruction, training and support to consumers throughout the New York metropolitan area while the stay-at-home directive was in place. This virtual model offered a range of rehabilitation services designed to ultimately assist consumers to become ready for competitive employment. HKSB continues to provide both remote and in-person rehabilitation and vocational services in order to support consumers as they work to achieve their educational and/or employment goals.

Highlights include the following:

**Employment Empowerment Group** – A soft skills group was held in order to learn critical work-readiness skills including punctuality, attendance, appropriate attire and behavior, and effective communication techniques. The group also discussed accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the two-minute elevator pitch, and virtual interviewing tips.

**Teen Tech Program** – The Tech Program is designed specifically for high school aged students, from 9th to 12th grade, that is focused on assistive technology training. The program operated under three separate modules with each module focused on a specific aspect of training such as using assistive technologies to access the Microsoft Windows operating system, the internet, e-mail and general Microsoft Office products.

**TEAM (Technology Employment Achievement and Mastery)** – TEAM is designed for working-age adults who require further work-readiness skills in order to obtain employment, and also offered a basic overview of Microsoft Office programs such as Word, Outlook, Excel and PowerPoint. TEAM also contained a customer service training component utilizing an online customer service training program which teaches on-the-job skills such as conflict resolution, resolving customer disputes and effective communication techniques.

**Social Casework Services** – Social workers conducted individualized and group counseling and support in order to assist consumers in resolving their personal struggles, as well as facilitate community interaction and peer-to-peer support while mitigating the effects of isolation. Topics addressed included adjustment to vision loss, budgeting and financing, access to community resources, emergency planning, health management and COVID-19 safety measures.

**INTRO (Immersive Navigation of Technology, Research and Occupations)** – A virtual pre-vocational and technology program was held for youths ages 12-18. This 4-week program focused on the development of their technology skills, such as using remote platforms, assistive technologies, the internet and word processing programs. Participants also engaged in online activities that enabled them to explore their vocational interests and the pathways to those vocations.



*Participants of HKSB's Employment Empowerment Group prepare their questions and notes for virtual mock interviews - SB Employment (Interviewer)*

**Foundations** – Now in its third year, the Foundations Program served 10 participants at its Brooklyn office utilizing social distancing measures and proper health protocols. The program provides a multi-disciplinary approach to work-readiness that teaches individuals the skills needed to succeed in a competitive marketplace. Topics of discussion included self-awareness and boundaries in the workplace, vocational strategies, adaptive equipment and vocational strengths.

*HKSB's Nicole McBride greets John, a Foundations participant*



*HKSB's Jayne Smith providing instruction to Foundations participants using social distancing*



**HKSB would like to gratefully acknowledge the following donors who supported its remote/virtual rehabilitation and vocational programs during the stay-at-home mandate:**

- The NYC COVID-19 Response and Impact Fund in The New York Community Trust
  - Sarah K. de Coizart Article TENTH Perpetual Charitable Trust
    - Wasily Family Foundation
  - William G. and Helen C. Hoffman Foundation
  - New York Community Bank Foundation
    - The Hyde and Watson Foundation
  - Reader's Digest Partners for Sight Foundation
    - Brooklyn Benevolent Society



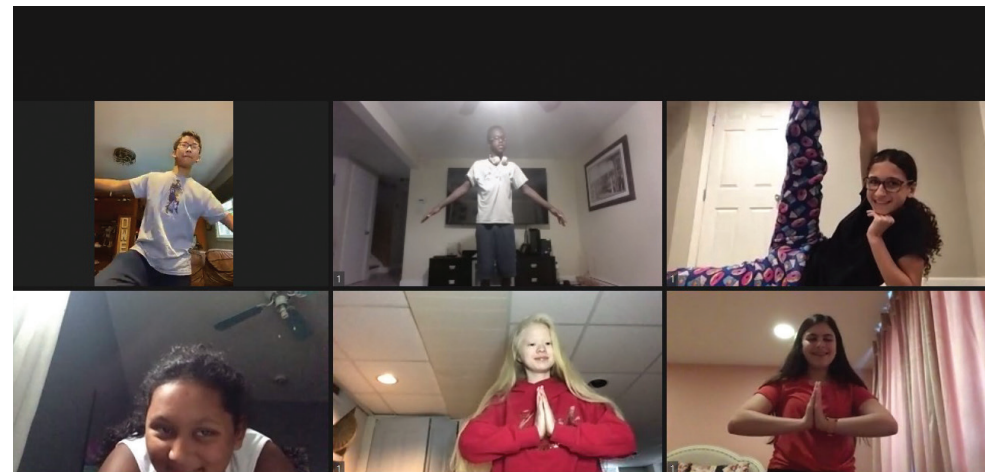
# Camp Helen Keller

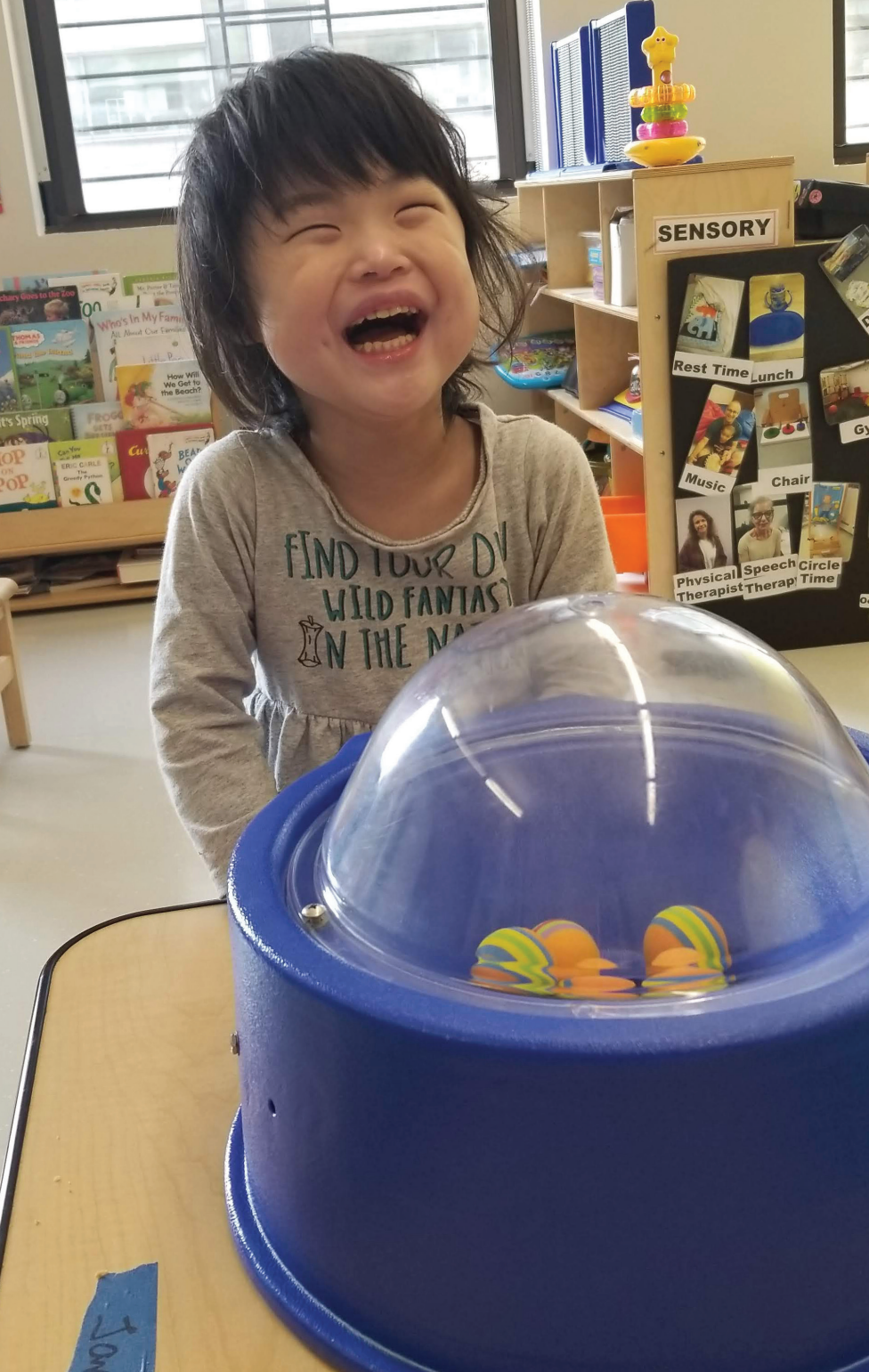
Camp Helen Keller looked a bit different this summer, but continued to enable children and youths with vision loss to connect with their peers and have fun through a free, four-week virtual camp experience. This year, 23 campers enjoyed arts and crafts, music and dance, and socialization opportunities over Zoom overseen by camp counselors. As is tradition, Camp Helen Keller concluded with the annual camp finale show wherein campers sing and performed songs, both solo and in groups, which was livestreamed via HKSB's Facebook page. Additionally, a large number of local government officials virtually visited the camp this summer, including the following:

- New York State Senator Jim Gaughran
- New York State Assemblyman Michael Montesano
- New York State Assemblywoman Taylor Darling
- New York State Senator Phil Boyle
- New York State Assemblywoman Judy Griffin
- New York State Senator Monica Martinez
- New York State Senator Anna Kaplan
- New York State Assemblywoman Melissa Miller
- New York State Assemblyman Ed Ra

HKSB would like to acknowledge the following donors for generously funding this year's Camp Helen Keller:

- Bannerot-Lappe Foundation
- Lily Palmer Fry Memorial Trust, Bank of America, N.A., Co-Trustee
- Lisa Beth Gerstman Foundation
- New York Grand Lodge Foundation Inc. Order Sons of Italy in America





# Children's Learning Center

"We are proud of ourselves for being a part of HKSB's Children's Learning Center. This school is the best fit for my daughter and definitely a great school in New York City! Kotoha spent only one year, but we wish she spent more years. We started missing all the people right after graduation. The best part? Their staff are always open and friendly, and the whole organization is completely transparent. For instance, when we had an IEP (Individualized Education Program) meeting for her kindergarten, they made tremendous efforts to have Kotoha have the best education and experience even after graduation. I felt that they are a team for us and that we were a part of the team!"

-- Nobuhiro Seki



# Health and Wellness Program

HKSB expanded its Health and Wellness Program this year thanks to a generous grant from the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation. While operating on a virtual platform, the program provided a critical and accessible therapeutic outlet to adults with visual impairments throughout the greater New York metropolitan area. A total of 19 individuals engaged in free weekly dance/movement therapy sessions to promote emotional and psychological release through creative movement expression, bi-weekly yoga sessions to encourage mindfulness practices and mental health support groups facilitated by clinical staff members to provide a safe outlet for their thoughts and feelings. Participants also had the opportunity to engage in fitness groups through audio recordings provided by Court 16's innovative Sound of Tennis Program. Additionally, nutrition and fitness workshops were hosted to offer information regarding healthy lifestyle choices in these areas. The classes, groups and workshops offered through the Health and Wellness Program enabled participants to set physical and mental health wellness goals for themselves to work on their desired outcomes in a supportive therapeutic environment. These activities continue to be especially crucial to consumers enrolled in this program, as social distancing remains vital to ensuring public health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## TEAM (Technology Employment Achievement and Mastery) Program

The TEAM (Technology Employment Achievement and Mastery) Program is designed for working-age adults who require further work-readiness skills in order to obtain employment, and also offers a basic overview of Microsoft Office programs such as Word, Outlook, Excel, and PowerPoint. TEAM also contains a customer service training component utilizing an online customer service training program, which teaches on-the-job skills such as conflict resolution, resolving customer disputes, and effective communication techniques. The following testimonials showcase how the TEAM Program has benefitted participants:

"My name is Jonathan Roque, and I am part of the TEAM Program group that meets in Hempstead. During the first half of the year, the program







was going great. We would meet every Monday and Tuesday in Hempstead and go through our lessons. Then COVID-19 hit and everything closed down, including the office in Hempstead. Luckily, we were contacted by our instructor, Marcia Hamilton, and we were told we would start having class through Zoom. I had a laptop and would be able to connect to the internet to join the classes, but unfortunately, I did not have access to Microsoft Word. Mrs. Hamilton reached out to me and told me that Helen Keller {Services for the Blind} could loan me a laptop in the meantime so I wouldn't fall behind. With the laptop loaned to me, I was able to keep up with the rest of the class while at home. I am grateful to Helen Keller {Services for the Blind} and Mrs. Hamilton. Something seemingly as small as this was a big help for me and helped me to not only not fall behind, but also to have a way to practice at home everything we had been learning in class."

"My name is Alisia Morris and I have been taking part in the TEAM Program from its start in January. In March, we switch to virtual learning over Zoom because of COVID-19. I was excited to continue learning no matter what, but having no computer access was an obstacle. Helen Keller {Services for the Blind} graciously loan me a computer to use for classes. I would like to express my gratitude to Helen Keller {Services for the Blind} for the loan of the computer and for the chance to take part in the TEAM Program. Without having the computer on loan, I would not be able to take part in the class remotely or be able practice for in-person classes and do homework. It has been an incredible opportunity which helped improve my confidence and chance of my goal of full-time employment."



# National Grid

Representatives from National Grid Foundation visited HKSB's Brooklyn office in February to meet with students enrolled in the agency's Youth Employment Strategies (YES) Program. The YES Program is a 20-week exploratory vocational training program offered at the New York Institute for Special Education. Successful applicants are given the tools and resources to complete a job search and secure employment on their own, or collaboratively. HKSB gratefully acknowledges National Grid Foundation for its generous support of the YES Program.

*From left to right: Mary Fu, Karen Wong, Lauren Bradshaw, Ed White, Vivian Higueta, Kandyce Turner, Gus Chalkias, Liz Meade*





# UPDATE ON HKS' GROUP HOMES

## DURING TIMES OF COVID-19



*Two residents restock one of their vending machines*



*The five residents of Destiny Home*

Just like the rest of the world, the residents at HKS' two group homes in Long Island have had to adjust to the many restrictions brought on by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Classified as Individual Residential Alternatives as defined by the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, HKS's group homes are:

The Beverly Luntey House located in Wantagh, which houses six adults who are blind, deaf-blind and/or have intellectual disabilities; and

The Destiny Home located in Port Washington, which houses five adults who are deaf-blind and have intellectual disabilities.

While the residents of the Beverly Luntey House typically spend their days attending HKSB's Day Habilitation Program in-person at Hempstead and enjoying other outings in the community, these activities came to a halt once the stay-at-home mandates were in place. Thanks to the hard work of staff, the residents remained safe and healthy at home and adjusted to the new restrictions put in place. The residents are now enjoying day habilitation services delivered to them safely in the house. They also received a generous donation of PPE equipment from the Lisa Beth Gerstman Foundation.

The Destiny Home is the first community residence in New York State for individuals who have combined hearing and vision loss as well as intellectual disabilities. Thanks to the invaluable support of staff, nurse and managers, the Destiny Home has continued to operate, and the five residents, with the help of their job coaches, are getting back to a new way of working. One resident now teaches her sign language classes through Zoom, and the management of a snack machine business has resumed following New York State guidelines. The residents have adjusted to this new lifestyle but are eager for things to get back to normal. HKS would like to thank The Community Chest of Port Washington for their support of the Destiny Home.



As a whole, the homes provide a rich living environment for the residents, giving them the opportunity to create a lifestyle that is representative of their preferences, choices and aspirations. HKS would like to gratefully acknowledge The Lavelle Fund for the Blind for their generous grant made in support of the group homes, which enabled our staff to continue the mission-critical, essential work of keeping the residents safe and healthy at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.





# SPECIAL EVENTS

HKS held a series of virtual events during the month of June.

During the challenging months due to the pandemic, HKS' Development Team switched gears from hosting its usual annual special events such as Helen's Run/Walk, HKS' Annual Golf Classic and HKS' Annual Gala and creatively came up with several virtual events.

## Helen's Run/Walk/Cycle:

Helen's Run/Walk/Cycle began the celebration of Deaf-Blind Awareness in New York. It was held from June 6 – 20 as a virtual event for the first time in its history. The event was a wonderful success with many innovative ways people found to participate whether it was indoors or outside in the fresh air while running, walking or cycling the 5K. People participated from Maine to Hawaii and shared so many wonderful photos on social media. We may have been far apart, but we did this together!

We are so very grateful to our sponsors: Peter and Jeri Foundation, Harding Real Estate, LTD., Setton Farms, Lions Club of Port Washington, Inc., Eyal Isaac, Eagle Sanitation, Inc., Epoch 5 Public Relations, Dime Community Bank, Orangetheory Fitness of Port Washington and to all our participants who helped to keep the annual tradition going! You were there for us when we needed you the most; thank you. All proceeds for this event provided funding for HKS' COVID-19 Relief. We hope you will join us for our second virtual Helen's Run/Walk/Cycle, the last week of April through the first week in May, 2021.

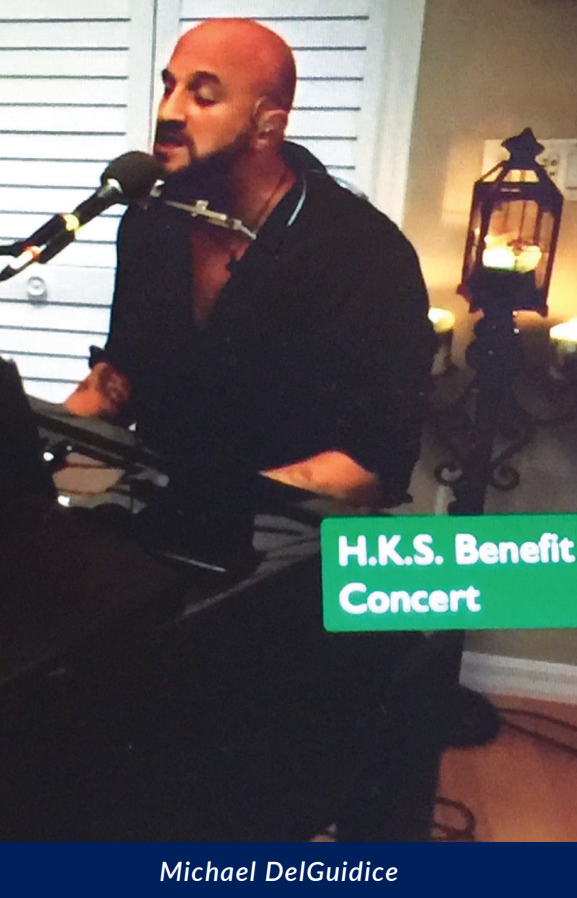
## HKS Virtual LIVE Benefit Concert:

On June 18th, HKS hosted a Virtual LIVE Benefit Concert on Facebook with Mike DelGuidice playing some of his original songs as well as those of Billy Joel and Elton John. The concert was a huge success with more than 10,000 views. The one-hour program also included a heartwarming montage depicting the many ways HKS programs and services has assisted the individuals served. The song Mike sang during the montage was "You Raise Me Up" (Josh Groban Cover).

## Highlights of Deaf-Blind Awareness Activities Across the Country:

June is the month that we eagerly await the celebration of DEAF-BLIND AWARENESS WEEK which always occurs during the last full week of the month and encompasses Helen Keller's Birthday on June 27th. In spite of the COVID-19 outbreak, many events took place across the country - although all slightly different.

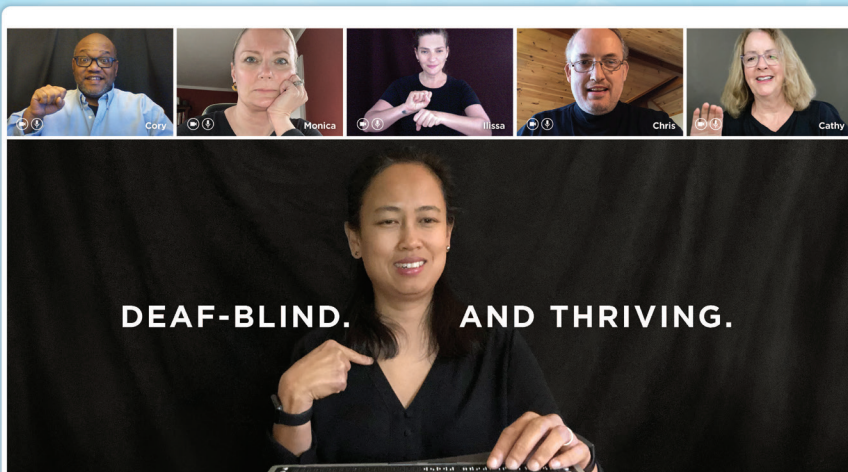
On June 25th, a livestream presentation of THE FEELING THROUGH EXPERIENCE was held. It included the "Feeling Through" film, a documentary and a panel discussion with Doug Roland, writer/director; Robert Tarango, the first deaf-blind person to appear in a feature film; Chris Woodfill, associate director of HKNC and Stephen Prescod, the co-star in "Feeling Through." Doug reports that viewers from all across the world watched this event. We are grateful to the Marjorie C. Adams Charitable Trust for supporting the interpreting services for this and other events at HKNC.



Michael DelGuidice



Participating in the Run/Walk/Cycle via an exercise bike



The 2020 Deaf-Blind Awareness Poster

OF ALL THE OBSTACLES PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF-BLIND OVERCOME, MISCONCEPTIONS DON'T HAVE TO BE ONE OF THEM.

Not only do people who are deaf-blind thrive in the workplace, they make their workplaces thrive, too. Companies with people who are deaf-blind experience an increase in productivity, a boost in company morale, and are nearly twice as likely to be innovative. So forget everything you think you know about people who are deaf-blind and experience their positive impact for yourself. LEARN HOW AT HELENKELLER.ORG/HKNC

DEAF-BLIND AWARENESS WEEK | JUNE 21 - JUNE 27, 2020



**NEBRASKA:** Kim Davis, who is with the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, shared her "Tidbits" in a short video in celebration of Deaf-Blind Awareness Week.

**NORTH CAROLINA:** Deaf-Blind Awareness SPIRIT WEEK (June 21-27) was a week full of activities each day including: Deaf-Blind Memorial Day, a Deaf-Blind Awareness Fact Day, a Wellness Day, an Inspirational Deaf-Blind People Day, a Deaf-Blind Friendly Day and, finally, Helen Keller's Birthday! These events were the result of a collaboration between the NC Department of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the NC Deaf-Blind Associates.

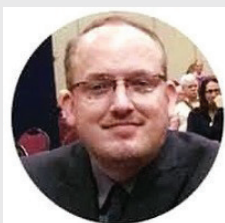
**NEW JERSEY:** A proclamation declaring the last week in June as Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness week was signed by Governor Phil Murphy and Lieutenant Governor Sheila Olive.

The DB CAN NJ ([www.dbcannj.org](http://www.dbcannj.org)) board hosted a Virtual Happy Hour on June 26, to celebrate Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Week along with Eyes Like Mine Inc. ([www.eyeslikemineinc.org](http://www.eyeslikemineinc.org)) who co-sponsored the event.

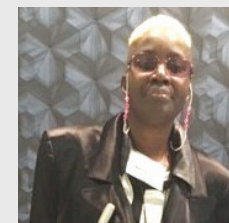
Another New Jersey event was DEAF-BLIND MAN CRUSH MONDAY and DEAF-BLIND WOMAN CRUSH WEDNESDAY highlighting "several deaf-blind men and women on Facebook." This innovative way of celebrating Deaf-Blind Awareness was the brainchild of Eyes Like Mine Inc. in partnership with DB CAN NJ.



**DEAF-BLIND MAN CRUSH MONDAY L-R below:**  
*Scott Davert; Jon Gabry and Chris Woodfill*



**DEAF-BLIND WOMAN CRUSH WEDNESDAY L-R below:**  
*Maricar Marquez and Alice Eaddy*



## NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH



In celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, HKS presented a free webinar on Oct. 22nd. Spearheaded by Joseph Melillo, HKNC's national employer business relations specialist, representatives from companies that lead with inclusion and access in their businesses discussed how hiring people with disabilities has helped them grow their brand, provide a competitive edge and increase productivity. The overall purpose of this webinar is to engage national employers to strengthen and build career opportunities for individuals who are deaf-blind. We are grateful to the Lavelle Fund for the Blind for their support of this initiative.

To gain insights into employer perspectives, HKNC has launched a new survey, "Supervising Employees who are Deaf-Blind." Specifically, we are interested in the types and effectiveness of accommodations and supports that employers use, and the preparation and support that supervisors receive. Results from the survey will be used to improve training and support for deaf-blind employees and their employers.



# Financial Statements

## Helen Keller Services

### Summarized Statement of Financial Position June 30, 2020 (with comparative of 2019)

ASSETS	2020	2019	2018
Cash and cash equivalents	\$5,850,173	\$1,938,610	\$1,849,780
Grants receivable	\$1,033,298	\$247,632	\$682,707
Program fees and accounts receivable	\$2,850,353	\$3,136,710	\$3,123,923
Pledges receivable, net	\$202,649	\$277,477	\$236,165
Due from other funds	\$207,455	\$207,474	\$447,309
Investments, at fair value	\$87,016,783	\$91,234,865	\$91,865,194
Property and equipment, net	\$10,082,755	\$9,894,206	\$5,714,916
Other assets	\$676,919	\$776,219	\$500,509
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$107, 920, 385</b>	<b>\$107, 713, 193</b>	<b>\$104, 420, 503</b>
LIABILITIES and NET ASSETS (Including PPP Loan)			
Liabilities			
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$8,397,050	\$4,236,723	\$2,974,520
Deferred income	\$481,696	\$480,632	\$793,241
Refundable deposits	\$165,977	\$165,827	\$165,716
Due to other funds	\$207,455	\$207,474	\$447,309
Deferred rent	\$5,341,849	\$5,808,462	\$1,551,695
Other liabilities	\$69,159	\$67,995	\$72,896
Accrued pension liability	\$19,286,614	\$16,388,723	\$14,313,346
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$33,949,800</b>	<b>\$27,355,836</b>	<b>\$20,318,723</b>
Net Assets			
Without donor restrictions	\$70,343,658	\$76,465,786	\$79,679,131
With donor restrictions			
Time/purpose restricted	\$918,043	\$1,182,687	\$1,688,352
Endowment funds	\$451,345	\$451,345	\$451,345
Perpetual in nautre	\$2,257,539	\$2,257,539	\$2,282,952
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$73,970,585</b>	<b>\$80,357,357</b>	<b>\$84,101,780</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$107,920,385</b>	<b>\$107,713,193</b>	<b>\$104,420,503</b>



<b>SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
Contributions and grants	\$1,278,970	\$1,183,456	\$995,312
Legacies	\$431,476	\$188,714	\$395,287
Special events: Gross Receipts	\$196,701	\$337,616	\$211,584
Less direct donor benefits	(\$129,922)	(\$216,971)	(\$109,254)
			(Including Donor Restrictions Column - Net)
<b>Total Public Support</b>	<b>\$1,777,225</b>	<b>\$1,492,815</b>	<b>\$1,492,929</b>
Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults – Grant income	\$17,840,165	\$15,720,764	\$13,323,710
Helen Keller Services for the Blind – Grant income	\$389,950	\$513,850	\$466,087
Training fees and allowances	\$10,668,083	\$10,640,560	\$10,948,199
<b>Total Fees and Grants from Government Agencies</b>	<b>\$28,898,198</b>	<b>\$26,875,174</b>	<b>\$24,737,996</b>
Investment income	\$2,817,085	\$3,346,259	\$2,769,814
Rental Income: Gross Receipts	\$381,789	\$351,253	\$338,346
Less direct costs	(\$519,864)	(\$599,718)	(\$571,193)
Net gain on investments	(\$1,575,760)	\$1,003,058	\$1,362,632
Other	\$177,206	\$113,226	\$110,329
<b>Total Other Revenue</b>	<b>\$1,280,456</b>	<b>\$4,214,078</b>	<b>\$4,009,928</b>
Net of Net assets released from restrictions/ contributions with donor restrictions	\$264,644		
<b>Total Support and Revenue</b>	<b>\$32,220,523</b>	<b>\$32,582,067</b>	<b>\$30,240,853</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Assistive Technology	\$555,747	\$548,831	\$457,257
Low Vision	\$474,567	\$448,305	\$560,897
Comprehensive Services	\$3,286,254	\$3,366,192	\$3,360,717
Supported Employment Services	\$39,744	\$45,161	\$41,721
Day Habilitation Services	\$2,533,588	\$2,724,261	\$2,796,635
Blind Children Program	\$3,457,618	\$3,643,483	\$3,310,293
Summer Camp	\$218,744	\$207,993	\$200,647
Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults	\$17,715,641	\$16,387,364	\$15,456,548
Residential	\$771,516	\$659,798	\$623,870
<b>Total Program Services</b>	<b>\$29,053,419</b>	<b>\$28,031,388</b>	<b>\$26,808,585</b>
Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults	\$1,519,239	\$1,695,338	\$1,636,237
Helen Keller Services for the Blind	\$3,602,913	\$3,737,192	\$4,401,295
<b>Total Supporting Services</b>	<b>\$5,122,152</b>	<b>\$5,432,530</b>	<b>\$6,037,532</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$34,175,571</b>	<b>\$33,463,918</b>	<b>\$32,846,117</b>
Change in net assets, before (increase) decrease in unfunded pension obligation	(\$2,218,492)	(\$881,851)	(\$2,605,534)
(Increase) Decrease in unfunded pension obligation	(\$4,168,280)	(\$2,862,572)	\$5,796,660
Change in net assets	(\$6,386,772)	(\$3,744,423)	\$3,191,126
Net assets, beginning of year	\$80,357,357	\$84,101,780	\$80,910,654
<b>Net assets, end of year</b>	<b>\$73,970,585</b>	<b>\$80,357,357</b>	<b>\$84,101,780</b>

This information shown herein has been summarized by Helen Keller Services from its 2020 audited financial statements.

A copy of the complete financial statements and auditor's report is available upon request.

Email us at [info@helenkeller.org](mailto:info@helenkeller.org)

or write us at HKS, 180 Livingston Street, 2nd Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201, Attention: CFO

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To learn more about HKNC's regional offices, visit  
[www.helenkeller.org/hknc/locations](http://www.helenkeller.org/hknc/locations)



# The Feeling Through Experience

The *Feeling Through Experience* is a 90 minute, 3-part screening event created by filmmaker Doug Roland in conjunction with HKS. The experience consists of a coming of age film about the unlikely connection between a teen in need and a man who is deaf-blind. It is the first film ever to feature a deaf-blind actor, Robert Tarango, in a lead role. Following the film there is a documentary about the journey of making the film and panel discussion and Q&A with members of the deaf-blind community and others.

The year 2020 was quite the ride for *The Feeling Through Experience*. It started off with the Los Angeles premiere in February at UCLA playing to a packed house of 300 people with 30+ attendees who were deaf-blind.

When the pandemic hit, Doug and HKS quickly pivoted creating virtual *Feeling Through Experiences* while retaining the accessibility and audience interaction. The *Feeling Through Experience* live stream was invited to present at the Americans With Disabilities Act 30th celebration hosted by the NYC Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities and at the India Inclusions Summit, the largest of its kind in India. Over 8 live stream events, *The Feeling Through Experience* reached thousands of viewers in 45+ states and 20 countries around the world.

But they didn't stop there, creating the weekly live stream *Feeling Through Live* featuring timely conversation with members of the deaf-blind community and beyond about issues relevant to all. In total, Doug and HKS hosted 35 episodes of the live stream this year, with 350,000 views across all platforms.

*Feeling Through* also had an amazing run on the film festival circuit this year, being an official selection of some of the most prestigious festivals and taking home 14 awards thus far, most of which are jury awards for best film and audience choice awards. And Robert Tarango went from being the first deaf-blind actor to an award-winning actor when he won the best actor award at the Port Townsend Film Festival (shared with co-star Steven Prescod), and then again at the Lake County Film Festival.

For more info on *Feeling Through*, go to [feelingthrough.com](https://feelingthrough.com) or [@FeelingThrough](https://www.instagram.com/FeelingThrough) on social media.



# Naming Opportunities

## A Contribution Today — A Legacy That Lasts a Lifetime

We thank the Joseph Mancino Family and HKS' Board of Trustees for taking the lead in naming opportunities in our Brooklyn headquarters. This year, we are grateful to the Cohen & Mizrahi LLP, Brooklyn, NY for naming the HKS' Elevator!

Whether it is your family name front and center in HKS' Downtown Brooklyn location, sponsorship of a classroom in our Children's Learning Center (CLC), or naming the Training Center that will help those we serve gain independence for years to come, there are many places you can leave a lifetime legacy today. Where will you leave yours? For more information on naming opportunities, please contact Mary Fu, by email at: [mfu@helenkeller.org](mailto:mfu@helenkeller.org) or by phone at 516-393-7992.





# Help us Grow the Future!

Your gift to Helen Keller Services makes it possible for us to give people who are visually impaired, blind or deaf-blind access to the training, technology and support that can help them live their best lives.















Scan this QR code using the camera on your smartphone, or visit the website below to learn more about how you can help!

[www.helenkeller.org/hks/donate](http://www.helenkeller.org/hks/donate)



## Other Ways to Support HKS

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### Give While You Shop

When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and select **Helen Keller Services** as your charity, a portion of your purchase will be donated to HKS!