

ANNUAL REPORT

2024



ADVANCING ACCESS
UNLOCKING POTENTIAL
ENGAGING COMMUNITIES



20 MILLION AMERICANS EXPERIENCE VISION LOSS.

BY 2050, THE NUMBER OF AMERICANS WITH VISION LOSS IS PROJECTED TO DOUBLE TO **40 MILLION**

2.4 MILLION AMERICANS HAVE COMBINED HEARING AND VISION LOSS

AN ESTIMATED **50,000 INDIVIDUALS** IN THE UNITED STATES ARE DEAFBLIND

HKNC PROVIDED SERVICES AND SUPPORTS TO **1,196 DEAFBLIND INDIVIDUALS** NATIONALLY IN 2024

27.8% OF US ADULTS 71 YEARS AND OLDER HAVE SOME FORM OF VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

OVER 400 OLDER ADULTS 55+ WERE SUPPORTED BY HELEN KELLER SERVICES FOR THE BLIND IN 2024

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LETTER FROM SUE RUZENSKI, CEO OF HELEN KELLER SERVICES

Dear valued donors, supporters, corporate partners, and community members,

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with gratitude and heartfelt appreciation for you. Your generosity and unwavering commitment have enabled us to fulfill our mission, creating impactful opportunities for people of all ages with vision loss and/or combined hearing and vision loss to achieve milestones and find pathways towards their own definition of success.

Through your support, we continue meeting individuals where they are on their journey, providing the experience, training, resources and connections they need to gain greater independence, meaningful employment and enhanced quality of life.

This has been an exciting year of transition as we welcomed John Filek as Executive Director of Helen Keller National Center, alongside Ryan Odland as Associate Director and Ashley Benton as Director of Field Services. Their talent, experience, and energy bring our vision for 2025 to life.

HKS has significantly expanded our reach this past year, supporting more individuals and families than ever before across New York and nationally. We've strengthened our focus on employment preparation, developing enhanced vocational training approaches that create new pathways to meaningful careers. Whether through comprehensive vocational rehabilitation, pre-school education, day habilitation, or specialized employment services, we're privileged to support each journey toward successful futures.

Our accessibility expertise grows each year through partnerships with companies, organizations, and universities creating state-of-the-art technology and making workforce diversity a priority. We've launched innovative professional learning courses and technical assistance projects to expand the knowledge and skills of service providers throughout the country. We've also made significant improvements to our facilities, including renovating the Independent Living department, dorm rooms and common areas to create more welcoming environments for our participants.

Looking ahead to 2025, we're pursuing ambitious goals:

- Establishing a second pre-school in New York for children with complex learning needs
- Enhancing our programs with STEAM curriculum, SAT preparation, and LinkedIn training
- Investing in staff development and leadership opportunities
- Expanding our professional development initiatives nationwide
- Strengthening advocacy efforts to create lasting social change

None of these accomplishments now or in the future would be possible without your generous support. Your belief in our mission and willingness to invest in our work inspire us every day. To our long-standing donors, thank you for your steadfast commitment. To our new supporters, welcome to our community of change-makers. Together, we are building a brighter future for individuals who are blind, have low vision and are DeafBlind.

With deepest gratitude,



DR. SUSAN RUZENSKI

CEO, HELEN KELLER SERVICES

Executive Team

Sue Ruzenski, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer
Helen Keller Services

Mia Murro
Chief Administrative Officer
Helen Keller Services

Sharona Hebroni
Chief Financial Officer
Helen Keller Services

John Filek
Executive Director
Helen Keller National Center

Jeff Kunkel
Chief of Programs
Helen Keller Services for the Blind

Chris Mastrangelo
Chief of Facilities
Helen Keller Services

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Namrata Yadav, SVP, Academy Community Advancement, Bank of America



Our Mission

Helen Keller Services' mission is to enable individuals who are DeafBlind, blind, have vision loss, or combined hearing and vision loss to live, work, and thrive in the communities of their choice. Through innovative technology, education, vocational rehabilitation, and advocacy, we transform barriers into opportunities, creating pathways to independence at every stage of life.

Our Legacy of Service

For over a century, Helen Keller Services has stood at the forefront of advancing access and opportunities for individuals with sensory disabilities. Our journey began in 1893 as the Industrial Home for the Blind, founded in Brooklyn with a pioneering vision: to provide education and employment opportunities for individuals who were blind. This foundation of empowerment and innovation has guided our evolution into a comprehensive organization serving communities nationwide.

In 1967, a congressional act established the Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults (HKNC), recognizing our expertise and entrusting us with the vital mission of serving the nation's DeafBlind community. This expansion marked a transformative moment in our history, enabling us to extend our impact from local to national reach.

Diversity Statement

At Helen Keller Services, diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging are at the heart of our organization. We are unwavering in our commitment to foster an inclusive culture where we appreciate and celebrate each person's abilities and identities. Together, we strive to make Helen Keller Services not just a workplace, but a community where diversity isn't a concept; it's a catalyst towards excellence and innovation.



Two Divisions, One Vision, One Purpose

Today, Helen Keller Services operates through two distinct yet complementary divisions.

Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults (HKNC)

As the only comprehensive national program of its kind, HKNC serves DeafBlind individuals from across the United States through its headquarters in Sands Point, NY, and a network of regional offices nationwide.

Helen Keller Services for the Blind (HKS)

Serving the New York metropolitan area and Long Island, HKS provides comprehensive services to individuals who are blind or have vision loss. From early intervention and preschool programs to technology education, youth services, vocational training, and specialized services for older adults, HKS creates opportunities for independence at every life stage.

Together as one organization, we provide a continuum of care from early childhood through senior years. Through this comprehensive approach, Helen Keller Services advances accessibility and independence by nurturing early development, building educational foundations, creating employment pathways, and supporting lifelong independence.

As a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, Helen Keller Services combines mission-driven purpose with professional excellence, ensuring that every individual we serve has the opportunity to reach their full potential.



HKNC



Helen Keller
NATIONAL CENTER
for DeafBlind Youths and Adults



HKS



Helen Keller
SERVICES FOR THE BLIND



Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults

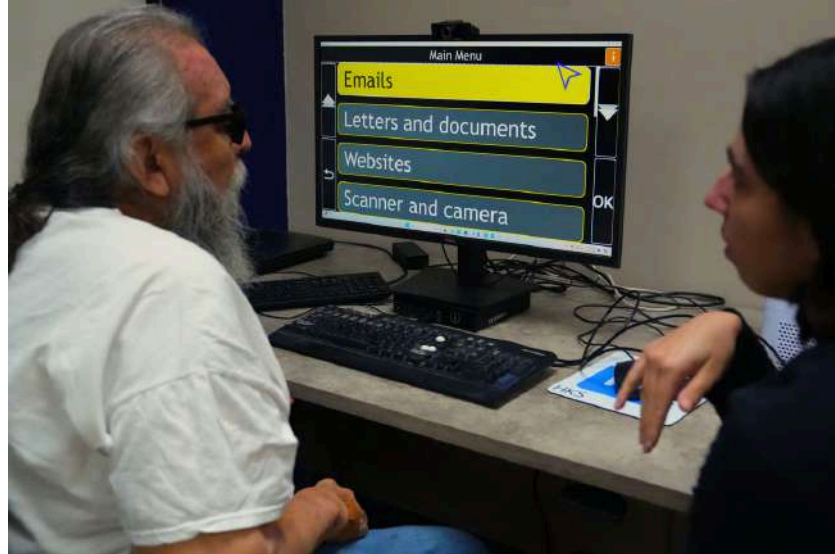
The Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) stands as the nation's only comprehensive vocational and rehabilitation program exclusively serving DeafBlind individuals and those with combined hearing and vision loss. Through our main campus in Sands Point, New York, and an extensive network of regional offices throughout the country, HKNC empowers individuals to achieve their full potential.

At the heart of HKNC's mission is our renowned Comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation Program (CVRP), which provides participants with personalized training essential for independence and achievement. Through the CVRP, individuals receive specialized instruction in adaptive technology, communication skills, orientation and mobility, and independent living, complemented by vital support services including audiology, low vision, rehabilitation counseling, medical, and professional interpreting. This holistic approach, combined with vocational training and job development, creates pathways to meaningful careers and community engagement.

Diverse Journeys, Tailored Services and Supports

DeafBlindness encompasses a broad spectrum of lived experiences. Individuals may be born with both vision and hearing loss, while others may experience changes in either or both senses over time. The degree of hearing and vision loss varies – from partial hearing loss combined with low vision to profound deafness and blindness.

At HKNC, we embrace a person-centered approach to working with and supporting individuals who are DeafBlind. This means tailoring services and programs to meet each individual's needs, preferences, and aspirations, ensuring they have the tools, resources, and opportunities to live, work, and thrive in their community of choice.



Technology Research and Innovation Center

The Technology Research and Innovation Center (TRIC) is dedicated to keeping the DeafBlind community informed about the latest advancements in accessible technology. TRIC provides intensive adaptive technology training, professional seminars, product reviews, and collaborates with companies to develop accessible solutions for enhanced independence and communication.

iCanConnect: National DeafBlind Equipment Distribution Program

Through the iCanConnect program, HKNC provides eligible DeafBlind individuals with free access to critical communication technology and training across eight states and territories including New York, Florida, Hawaii, Iowa, Kentucky, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

Older Adult Program and Confident Living

HKNC's Older Adult Program supports adults 55+ with hearing and vision loss to preserve their independence and quality of life. Our Confident Living Program offers a week of training in practical skills including assistive technologies, safe travel techniques, home management, communication strategies, self-advocacy, emergency preparedness, and the use of Support Service Providers.

Professional Learning and Leadership Institute (PLLI)

PLLI provides paid 3-month internships that prepare DeafBlind individuals for careers in vocational rehabilitation. This program develops professionals who bring both practical knowledge and personal understanding to enrich the community. In 2024, we welcomed 3 PLLI interns to HKNC.

Destiny Home

Destiny Home, New York State's first community residence for DeafBlind individuals with intellectual disabilities, operates in Port Washington with specially trained staff versatile in multiple communication methods. In 2024, one resident secured employment at Harbor Deli, while all residents engaged in work, volunteer activities, and life skills development.

Community Services Programs

Within New York and California, our Community Services Programs extend HKNC's expertise through intensive local support. Our staff provides sustained training in job development, independent living skills, and mobility instruction, helping individuals build independence and thrive in their communities, workplaces, and social circles.



SPECIALIZED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAMS CAN INCREASE EMPLOYMENT RATES BY UP TO 40%

Vocational Training

At HKNC, we are dedicated to partnering with individuals who are DeafBlind to achieve meaningful employment. Participants receive customized training tailored to their career goals, with a focus on adaptive technology proficiency, workplace readiness, and independent living skills. By addressing the needs of each individual, the program creates pathways to employment, preparing participants to thrive in both personal and professional settings.

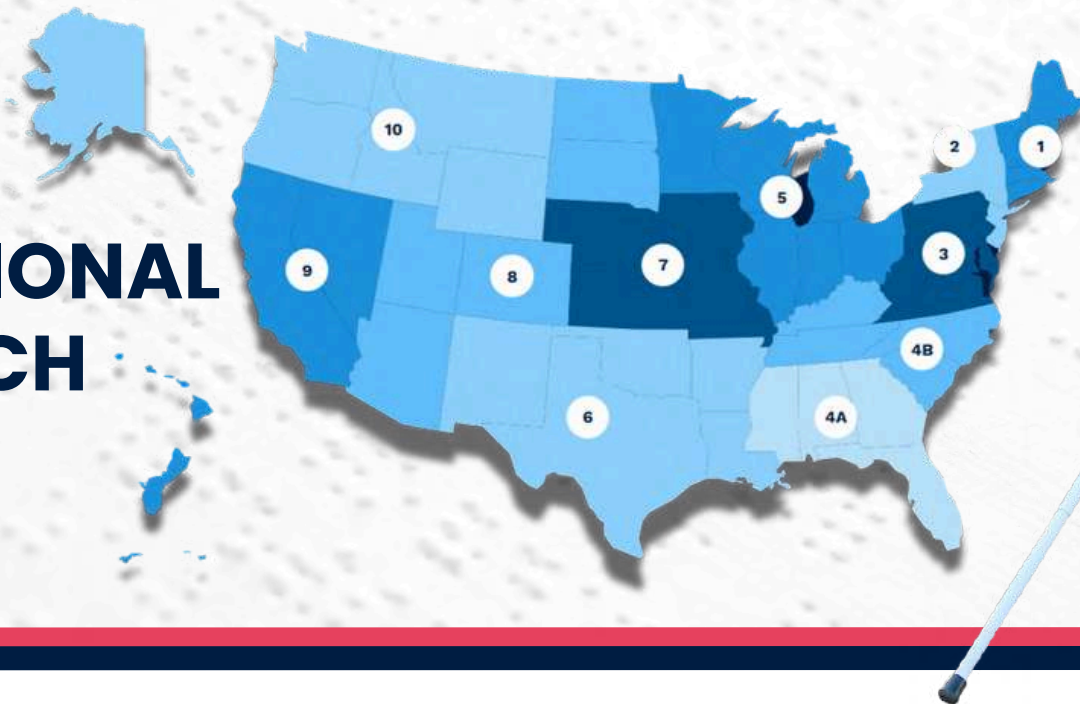
The program offers practical experience across a diverse range of industries, ensuring participants build job-specific expertise. Our comprehensive approach includes resume building, interview preparation, and direct connections with employers through strategic partnerships. This combination of skill-building and job placement services fosters confidence and independence, equipping participants with the skills to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

On-Campus & Summer Youth Programs

During the crucial transition years between adolescence and adulthood, our youth programs provide transformative experiences through peer connections, career exploration, and hands-on learning, building confidence and skills for independence.

Our Summer Youth Vocational Program (SYVP) offers a six-week experience where participants gain real-world work experience through paid internships, while our Pre-Employment Transition Services provide vital career guidance and workplace preparation for youth aged 14-21. Additional opportunities include the M~POWER program for college and career exploration with DeafBlind mentors, and our Summer Assessment Program for skill development. Working alongside job coaches and vocational specialists, participants explore career pathways and build the professional skills needed for their future success.

OUR NATIONAL REACH



In addition to the residential training facility in Sands Point, NY, HKNC also offers services through our 11 regional offices across the country.

Regional Representatives serve as the essential bridge between HKNC's comprehensive programs and services and local communities. These specialists collaborate closely with state vocational rehabilitation agencies, educational institutions, healthcare providers, and community organizations to create seamless support networks. By coordinating with state and local partners, we ensure that DeafBlind individuals can access the full spectrum of available resources while receiving specialized support tailored to their needs.

DeafBlind Employment Specialists transform workplace cultures and create pathways to meaningful careers. Working directly with DeafBlind job seekers, employers, and vocational rehabilitation counselors, these experts facilitate job placements and help build inclusive workplaces where DeafBlind employees can thrive.

Through this collaborative network, HKNC brings specialized expertise directly into communities across the country. Our proven approach has established us as a trusted partner with government agencies, educational institutions, and organizations for guidance, training, and support.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 New England Region
CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT | 2 Mid-Atlantic Region
NJ, NY | 3 East Central Region
DE, DC, MD, PA, VA, WV |
| 4A Southeast Region A
AL, FL, GA, MS, VI | 4B Southeast Region B
KY, NC, PR, SC, TN | 5 North Central Region
IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI |
| 6 South Central Region
AR, LA, NM, OK, TX | 7 Great Plains Region
IA, KS, MO, NE | 8 Rocky Mountain Region
CO, AZ, ND, SD, UT |
| 9 Southwest Region
CA, HI, NV, GU, AS, CM | 10 Northwest Region
AK, ID, OR, WA, MT, WY | |

85% OF DBIE PARTICIPANTS, AGES 15–24, WERE INTRODUCED TO WORK EXPERIENCES THAT MATCHED THEIR SKILLS AND INTERESTS



DeafBlind Immersion Experience

The DeafBlind Immersion Experience (DBIE) provides intensive, person-centered training for DeafBlind individuals with complex support needs, their families and support teams. Through a collaborative five-day program, the curriculum encompasses hands-on skill development, support team training, work-based learning opportunities, environmental modifications, and communication strategies—all designed to enhance independence in home, work, and community settings.

2024 DBIE Highlights:

In 2024, the DBIE program marked a significant expansion through strategic partnerships with New York Foundling, Kreider Services and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, extending training services across multiple states while strengthening its presence at our New York center. These collaborations enabled the DBIE program to reach new communities and support networks, reinforcing the program's commitment to enhancing independence and community access for DeafBlind individuals with complex needs. The success of these initiatives and positive feedback from families and providers has generated increased interest in our DBIE services, setting a strong foundation for continued growth in 2025.



INNOVATION AND IMPACT IN DEAFBLIND SERVICES

The Helen Keller National Center advances DeafBlind services through groundbreaking research partnerships, innovative program models and evidence-based implementation frameworks. Through collaborative initiatives with state agencies, academic institutions, and service providers, our regional network creates sustainable solutions and lasting impact for DeafBlind individuals nationwide.

Research & Service Innovation

- Established landmark Usher Syndrome research partnership with Louisiana State University
- Created online learning hub for Washington Department of Services for the Blind
- Developed hybrid summer program in Arizona for transition-age youth
- Implemented specialized task force model in Texas with 12 teams

Statewide Program Development

- Launched Nebraska's first statewide Support Service Provider services pilot program
- Built Alabama's sustainable SSP infrastructure and transportation matrix system
- Created Georgia's innovative legislative framework for SSP services
- Developed specialized transition support model gaining multi-state adoption

Implementation & Education

- Integrated HKNC techniques into Utah state school curriculum
- Developed specialized work-based learning assessment tools
- Established UCLA Disability Studies DeafBlind Expertise Program
- Created new microenterprise opportunities model for individuals with additional disabilities

These initiatives demonstrate HKNC's commitment to advancing the entire field of DeafBlind services. Through collaborative partnerships and innovative approaches, we continue to break down barriers and create lasting change that enables DeafBlind individuals to live, work, and thrive in the communities of their choice.



professional development

INFORMATION, RESEARCH & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Information, Research and Professional Development (IRPD) department shapes the future of DeafBlind support and services through research, education, and innovation. This vital work encompasses developing evidence-based training materials and accessibility standards, creating comprehensive online learning platforms and resources, and fostering collaborations with academic institutions to advance the understanding of DeafBlind needs and interventions.

2024 Impact by the Numbers

- 38 professional trainings delivered to 1,522 professionals and family members
- Training provided across 29 states and 8 national sessions
- Participants from 30 states and 4 countries attended national training events
- 70 outreach events reaching 4,060 individuals

Expanding Access & Building Capacity Nationwide

HKNC's commitment to accessible education and nationwide impact continues to grow through our expanding digital presence and collaborative network. With 35 self-paced online courses and comprehensive learning hubs, we provide multi-language accessibility including Spanish, ASL, spoken English interpretation, captions, and visual descriptions.

Our collaborative network spans vocational rehabilitation counselors, service providers, administrators, interpreters, mobility specialists, and family advocates, working together to enhance support across communities. Through IRPD's work and these digital initiatives, HKNC ensures innovations in DeafBlind services evolve to benefit both program participants and the broader DeafBlind community nationwide.



In 2024, HKNC's Older Adult Program intensified its efforts to address a critical demographic shift: the rapidly growing population of adults aged 55 and older experiencing combined hearing and vision loss. Through strategic presentations at major national conferences and targeted virtual education sessions, our research team shared groundbreaking findings from our nationwide study "Recognizing the Needs of Older Adults with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss."

This outreach initiative elevated awareness while fostering crucial partnerships with aging and disability organizations nationwide. Our presentations across diverse venues ensure the research directly influences service delivery, healthcare practices, and policy decisions.

Study Impact & Reach

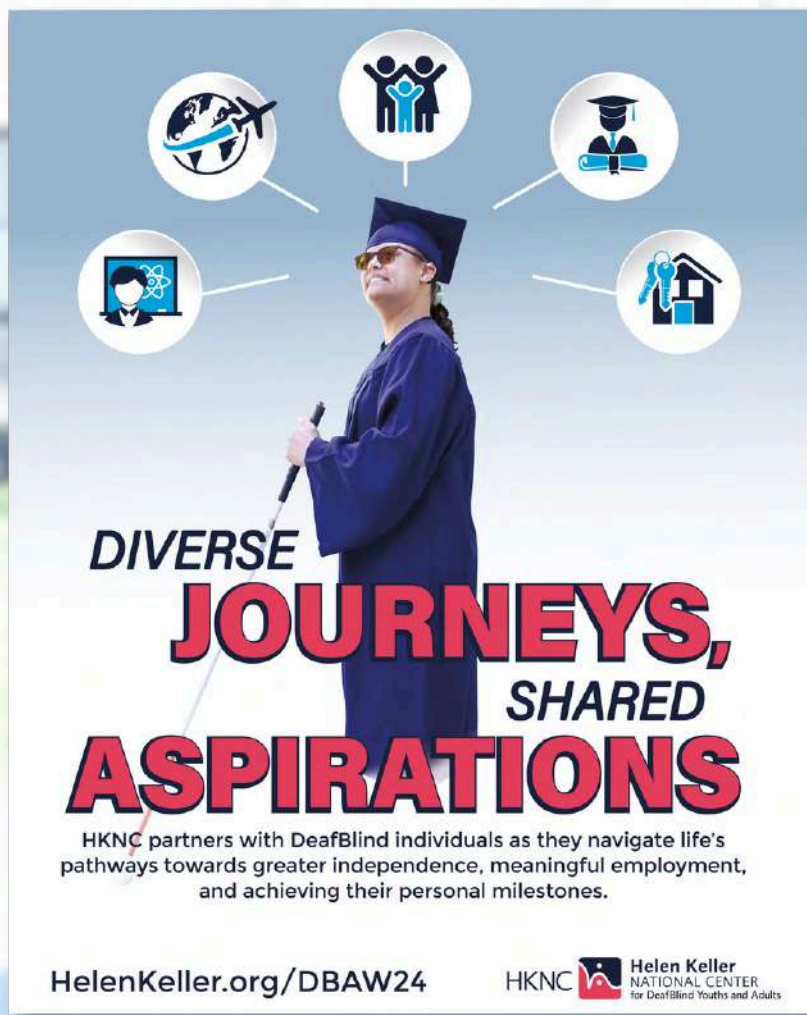
- 334 responses across 45 states and 3 U.S. territories
- First comprehensive study of service needs for DeafBlind adults 55+
- Findings inform professional practice and policy recommendations

National Conference Presentations

- National Council on Aging Conference (Arlington, VA) - May 2024
- American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association Conference (Atlanta, GA) - May/June 2024
- SERID Conference (Hilton Head Island, SC) - November 2024

Virtual Education Series

- Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss and Sight and Sound Impaired Committee (April 2024): Services and research findings for individuals 55+ with combined hearing and vision loss
- Metropolitan Asian Deaf Association (August 2024): NYC area services for DeafBlind seniors
- WellConnected Presentation (December 2024): Supporting older adults with combined hearing and vision loss



DeafBlind Awareness Week 2024

In June 2024, Helen Keller Services marked the 40th anniversary of DeafBlind Awareness Week, established by Presidential Proclamation in 1984, with an impactful nationwide campaign. The centerpiece was a commemorative poster featuring Kahlyn, a former HKNC participant, whose portrait as a graduate symbolized the pathways to independence and aspirations that we all have in common – powerfully illustrating the campaign theme "Diverse Journeys, Shared Aspirations."

The campaign resonated deeply within the community and beyond, with numerous organizations across the country adopting our downloadable materials and messaging resources. Through both digital and traditional channels, we highlighted how HKNC partners with DeafBlind as they navigate life's pathways towards greater independence, meaningful employment, and achieving their personal milestones. The campaign materials gained widespread recognition, becoming a top Google search result while reinforcing HKNC's position as a leader in supporting and celebrating the DeafBlind community.



MYASIA STEPS FORWARD WITH PURPOSE

“Before I got to HKNC, I didn’t think I would be able to live an independent life and felt like a burden to the people around me. But the training provided by HKNC has helped me regain my independence.”

Six years ago, a life-threatening medical event left Myasia legally blind, hard of hearing, and unable to walk. Now facing the challenges of having combined hearing and vision loss, what could have been a moment of defeat became her turning point.

When Myasia arrived at HKNC, she was uncertain about her future, feeling disconnected and dependent. Through our comprehensive training programs, she rediscovered her independence and purpose. Myasia learned critical skills like white cane navigation, assistive technology use, daily living tasks, and professional communication. Her determination led her to complete a successful work experience at the Long Island Center for Independent Living, where she excelled in a survey project for the director.

Now pursuing her peer specialist certification with aspirations to become a mental health counselor, Myasia has become a strong advocate within our community. Her story embodies our mission: supporting individuals to achieve their own definition of success. Through a combination of specialized training, guidance and personal determination, Myasia has certainly charted a new path forward.



FROM STUDENT TO TEACHER: KITTY PERSEVERES

While awaiting entry into HKNC's Comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Kitty began familiarizing herself with tactile sign language, braille, and independent living concepts to prepare for her upcoming training. She even gained valuable experience as an Instructor's Aide, foreshadowing her future career path.

After completing her HKNC training in 2023, a unique opportunity emerged through her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in her home community of Frederick, Maryland. Kitty connected with another individual in her community who was experiencing acquired vision and hearing loss and seeking instruction in braille and sign language. Recognizing Kitty's potential as an instructor, her counselor helped establish her as a contracted vendor, creating a path that aligned perfectly with Kitty's aspirations to teach.

Today, Kitty has transformed her own learning journey into a meaningful career. With support from her team and teaching resources from HKNC's Region 3 program representatives, she has developed a comprehensive curriculum to help individuals with acquired vision and hearing loss master braille and sign language. While the path wasn't always smooth, Kitty's determination and creativity have led her to a role she cherishes – helping others navigate their journey back to confident community engagement. Her success demonstrates HKNC's mission: offering opportunities for individuals to achieve their goals while creating positive change in their communities.



BREAKING NEW GROUND: FARUQUEE'S SUCCESS AT AMAZON

After facing numerous setbacks and receiving multiple rejection emails, Faruquee refused to give up on his dream of finding meaningful employment. Through HKNC's DeafBlind Employment Services program in Orlando, Florida, Faruquee secured a position at Amazon as an inventory clerk. The support provided by HKNC's DeafBlind Specialist was instrumental in ensuring his success. Working with Amazon managers, the HKNC team implemented crucial workplace accommodations, including a customized communication system with cards for colleague interactions.

Transportation services through Uber, Lyft, and Access Lynx were coordinated to ensure Faruquee could arrive safely at the employee entrance each day. The team provided comprehensive Orientation and Mobility services to help Faruquee navigate his work environment confidently and independently. Safety protocols included an emergency contact card and a unique procedure where coworkers were trained to draw an "X" on his back during emergencies.

After just two months, Faruquee's dedication earned him a promotion to full-time Inventory Control and Quality Assurance Specialist. His managers praise his performance and work ethic, and he has found a truly supportive workplace at Amazon. Both Faruquee and his Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors express deep gratitude for HKNC's assistance. His journey from job seeker to valued team member demonstrates how HKNC empowers DeafBlind individuals to achieve independence and build fulfilling careers.

Faruquee's success exemplifies how effective partnerships can create pathways to meaningful careers. With the right tools, resources, and accommodations, he has created a bright future at Amazon where his talents are recognized and his potential continues to grow.



GRACIE'S PATH TO EMPLOYMENT AND GREATER INDEPENDENCE

Through HKNC's DeafBlind Immersion Experience program, Gracie and her support team discovered new pathways to independence and community engagement. Their journey began with an immersive week of training at HKNC's campus, where she learned vocational skills, communication techniques, and strategies for navigating workplace and community settings. Her support team—comprising her grandmother, speech pathologist, and local specialists—received guidance on how to foster her independence and guide Gracie to tap into her strengths and capabilities.

During the program, Gracie excelled in vocational assessments, demonstrating her ability to follow structured routines, complete job tasks, and interact with supervisors. With HKNC's support, she transitioned these skills into her home community in Arizona, where she secured two competitive employment positions at a local building company and a coffee shop. These jobs, tailored to her skills and supported by HKNC's job coaching, have become a source of pride and fulfillment for Gracie and her family.

Gracie's story reflects HKNC's commitment to providing tailored resources and services to the diverse DeafBlind community, including individuals with CHARGE syndrome. Through this comprehensive, collaborative approach, Gracie and her support team gained the skills, confidence, and strategies needed to help her thrive in her community.



Helen Keller Services for the Blind: Possibilities Across Generations

Helen Keller Services for the Blind (HKSBS) has a rich legacy of supporting individuals who are blind or have low vision. With roots dating back to 1893 as the Industrial Home for the Blind, HKSBS has continuously evolved to address the changing needs of the community. Today, HKSBS works together with individuals of all ages and their families so they can live, work, and thrive in the communities of their choice.

Through a comprehensive range of services, HKSBS meets individuals wherever they are on their journey. Programs include early intervention for children, assistive technology and college-readiness programs for teens and young adults, vocational training and job placement for adults, and specialized resources for seniors adjusting to vision loss. HKSBS embraces innovation with state-of-the-art assistive technology training, equipping participants with the tools needed to navigate an increasingly digital world.

Every service is tailored to the unique needs and aspirations of those served, ensuring that each individual has the opportunity to achieve their goals. This commitment to personalized care reflects HKSBS's belief in the power of possibility and its dedication to creating inclusive communities where everyone can thrive.



HKSB New York City
 180 Livingston Street
 Brooklyn, NY 11201
 718-522-2122

Headquarters for Helen Keller Services (HKS), including all Administrative Services

- Children's Learning Center (Early Intervention and preschool programs as well as the Parent Resource Center)
- Rehabilitation Services
- Assistive Technology Center
- Low Vision Clinic

HKSB Nassau County
 One Helen Keller Way
 Hempstead, NY 11550
 516-485-1234

Central location for all Nassau County Services

- Rehabilitation Services
- Assistive Technology Center
- Low Vision Clinic
- Adaptive Living Program for Seniors
- Services for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities, including day habilitation, residential rehabilitation, supported employment and a community residence.

HKSB Suffolk County
 1767 Veterans Memorial
 Highway, Suite 18
 Islandia, NY 11749
 631-424-0022

Central location for all Suffolk County Services

- Rehabilitation Services
- Adaptive Living Program for Seniors
- Services for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities, including a Program Without Walls.



Orientation and Mobility Our certified instructors provide comprehensive training in white cane techniques, route planning, and public transportation. Participants develop the skills and confidence to navigate independently in their communities.

Independent Living Skills Through adaptive techniques and technologies, participants master essential skills from meal preparation to financial management. Our personalized training builds the foundation for maintaining independence at home and in the community.

Assistive Technology Program Across our Brooklyn, Hempstead, and Islandia centers, experts provide training in screen readers, magnification tools, and smart home technologies. Our personalized guidance helps participants effectively navigate today's digital landscape.

Social Casework Services Licensed social workers provide emotional support through counseling, peer groups, and benefits navigation assistance, helping participants build resilience and community connections.

Employment Services Our comprehensive program includes career exploration, job placement, and Work Experience Training internships. On-site support from vocational specialists ensures participants gain the experience and accommodations needed for workplace success.

Low Vision Services State-certified specialists across three clinics provide evaluations and strategies to maximize remaining vision through adaptive devices and techniques, helping participants overcome daily challenges.

Adaptive Living Program for Seniors For adults 55 and older experiencing vision loss, our team provides in-home support through environmental modifications, technology training, and practical strategies to maintain independence.



EMPLOYMENT-FOCUSED TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS

Leveraging Technology for Employment

We offer technology training designed for teens and young adults as well as for working age adults preparing participants to pursue their career goals. Each program emphasizes practical skills that can be applied to real-world situations, leveraging technology in achieving personal, academic and professional goals.

Teen Tech Program: Where Technology Meets Opportunity

The Teen Tech Program equips blind and low vision students aged 14-18 with essential technology skills for academic and career success. Delivered virtually in three modules, the program covers mainstream and assistive technologies, including Microsoft Windows, internet browsing, JAWS, and ZoomText, fostering digital literacy and independence. In 2024, we began expanding the program nationally, extending its reach to ensure more students can access the tools and training needed to achieve their goals and unlock their potential.

TEAM Program

The TEAM (Technology, Employment, Achievement, and Mastery) Program is a remote learning initiative that empowers blind and low vision professionals to excel in today's competitive job market. Through small, personalized cohorts, participants gain advanced skills in Microsoft Office applications, professional customer service, strategic networking, and resume development while building confidence and readiness for the digital workplace.

Certified AccessAbility Testing Program: National Expansion

In 2024, we expanded our Certified AccessAbility Testing (CAT) Program nationwide through our partnership with NYS Preferred Source (NYSPS). This 14-week remote program combines live instruction and mentoring to prepare blind and low vision screen reader users for careers in digital accessibility testing. Graduates receive certification and opportunities for part-time employment with our corporate partner, AccessabilityOfficer, along with a full year of job placement support, ensuring their success in this growing field.



**93 CHILDREN
SERVED IN 2024**

THE CHILDREN'S LEARNING CENTER

Helen Keller Services for the Blind's Children's Learning Center is a specialized program located in Downtown Brooklyn which offers a full range of programs and services for preschool children who are blind or have low vision, as well as multiple disabilities, autism, Down syndrome, or pervasive developmental delays. Our dedicated team of professionals creates an inclusive and nurturing environment that fosters growth and development.

Our early intervention program provides in-home therapeutic services for infants and toddlers with visual impairments and additional disabilities. Our comprehensive team includes teachers of the visually impaired, speech therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and orientation and mobility specialists who work collaboratively to support each child's development. Through our Parent Resource Center, we offer multilingual support and resources to families, recognizing their crucial role in their child's progress.

2024 Highlights

Our ongoing partnership with the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music continues to provide vital music therapy through IDEA grant funding. Additional grant support this year enabled us to expand our therapeutic offerings to include visual arts and Mexican dance classes from Art Horizons. Parent engagement flourished with innovative activities like "Sip & Paint," "Drumming with Mommy," and "Dancing for Daddy," while new partnerships with organizations like Magic Home Care expanded support services for our families. In April, we hosted an Autism Awareness, Acceptance and Assistive Technology event featuring LoganTech demonstrations and expert presentations, helping parents and educators better support communication needs of children with autism.

Our Children's Learning Center continues to demonstrate remarkable growth in response to community demand. In early 2025, we will open our 7th classroom, along with new therapy rooms and a dedicated sensory space, expanding our capacity to serve more families seeking specialized early intervention and preschool services. Staffed with our exceptional multidisciplinary team, this expansion will reduce waiting times and seamlessly integrate into our comprehensive service model, ensuring we maintain our impressive staff-to-student ratios while meeting the growing needs of our community.



CAMP HELEN KELLER

46 CAMPERS ENROLLED IN 2024

Camp Helen Keller concluded another vibrant summer, providing children ages 4 to 15 who are blind or have low vision a variety of adapted activities to enhance self-esteem, confidence, and social skills. From July 8 to August 9, 2024, campers enjoyed swimming, music, dance, arts and crafts, computer skills, field games, and science activities and more at the LIU Post Campus in Brookville, NY.

The season culminated in the annual end-of-summer show, where campers showcased their talents through heartwarming performances alongside their peers and counselors. At Camp Helen Keller, children discover their strengths, form lasting friendships, and build independence in a supportive environment.

This summer, we introduced the Epic Excursions program, a weeklong adventure offering thrilling field trips to an equestrian center, trampoline park, and rock wall and zip-lining experiences. While these programs continue to transform lives, we face increasing challenges in maintaining this vital, no-cost service for our community.



ADULT DAY HABILITATION PROGRAM

HKSB's Adult Day Habilitation Program provides a comprehensive, person-centered approach to supporting individuals with developmental disabilities. Serving 50 adults, the program offers a dynamic blend of skill development, creative expression, and community engagement designed to foster independence, personal growth, and meaningful participation in community life.

Our holistic approach integrates critical life skills training, including personal care, household management, and budgeting, alongside creative and vocational activities. Participants engage in hands-on learning experiences that promote independence, self-expression, and personal development. Through individualized support plans, carefully crafted community outings, and pre-vocational training, we empower each individual to explore their potential and build confidence.

2024 Highlights

This year marked significant growth and innovative programming for our Day Habilitation services. A standout achievement was the development of our Program Without Walls in Islandia, which established a meaningful community partnership with Panera Bread. Three days a week, our participants now actively contribute to community service by collecting, packaging, and delivering bread and food to a local food bank.

Our program continued to create memorable experiences for participants throughout the year. Highlights included an annual picnic at Eisenhower Park in September, a vibrant Halloween costume and sensory party in October, a warm Thanksgiving celebration with pies and a staff potluck, and a festive holiday party with gifts for each participant.



FROM EARLY INTERVENTION TO GRADUATE SCHOOL: UNLOCKING OF CHELSIE'S POTENTIAL

Chelsie Reid, 2004

Born with retinoblastoma, a form of eye cancer, and immigrating with her family from Guyana, Chelsie faced societal misconceptions about blindness. However, through Helen Keller Services' comprehensive support, her life became a testament to independence and achievement.

Chelsie's journey began at the Helen Keller Services for the Blind Children's Learning Center, where early intervention services laid the foundation for her development. "Through the dedication of the staff at Helen Keller Services," Chelsie recalls, "I began learning braille, mobility skills, and how to navigate the world despite my limited vision."

Her early years were filled with discovery. Music classes allowed her to explore different sounds and instruments, while physical therapy sessions helped develop crucial motor skills. Chelsie's physical development was also nurtured during her preschool years. "Physical therapy also played a crucial role in my development during preschool," Chelsie remembers. "I vividly recall learning balance through ballet classes that were part of the program." This early exposure to movement and balance fostered not just physical strength but a deep sense of capability. One of her most cherished memories was learning to ride a bicycle - an achievement that built lasting confidence in her abilities. The CLC program also introduced Chelsie to guide dogs, sparking what would become a lifelong connection.

As Chelsie grew older, she continued to be supported by Helen Keller Services, moving into the career program as a youth. "Through this program, I learned how to dress for success, the importance of punctuality, and honed my interview skills," Chelsie explains. "Most significantly, I gained proficiency in using technology, which has served as a bridge between the blind community and the wider population." The program helped Chelsie gain essential skills for her future, including digital literacy, which would prove invaluable as she pursued higher education.



Chelsie Reid, 2024

“Many people are often surprised by our adeptness in using computers or iPads,” Chelsie shares. “But it is thanks to Helen Keller Services that I acquired these indispensable tools to pursue my aspirations.”

Now, as a graduate student at Fordham University pursuing a master’s degree in Mental Health Counseling, Chelsie continues to embody the potential that Helen Keller Services helped unlock. “I’m studying for my master’s degree,” she shares. “I reflect on the profound influence Helen Keller Services has had on my life, and I am immensely grateful for the strong foundation they provided.”

"Much of my success is attributable to Helen Keller Services. Their support has been invaluable, not only to me but also to my family. They understood the importance of nurturing students from an early age, enabling us to confidently explore and engage with the world."

Chelsie’s journey stands as a powerful reminder of what is possible when individuals are given the tools, support, and the opportunity to reach their fullest potential. Her success is a testament to her own determination and the impact of Helen Keller Services, as her story reflects the full breadth of services we provide—from early intervention to youth programs, and beyond.



RESTORING INDEPENDENCE: NORMA'S ADAPTIVE LIVING JOURNEY

With over 20 million Americans experiencing vision loss—a number expected to double by 2050—Helen Keller Services' Adaptive Living Program (ALP) provides critical support that transforms uncertainty into confidence. For seniors facing age-related vision changes from conditions like macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, or glaucoma, ALP delivers comprehensive solutions that preserve independence and dignity.

Norma's journey exemplifies how our personalized approach creates lasting impact. Following an in-depth assessment of her needs and goals, our specialists developed targeted strategies that restored her confidence in essential daily activities. In her kitchen, strategically placed tactile markers and large-print guides transformed her microwave and coffee maker from obstacles into tools for independent living. A customized system of signature guides, bold-writing tools, and an iBill money identifier returned her control over personal finances.

Technology amplifies Norma's independence through carefully selected solutions. Her Google Nest Mini provides instant access to news, weather, and entertainment, while optimized accessibility features on her mobile devices keep her connected with family and community. Through the ALP's support, she mastered essential safety practices including medication management with specialized organizers and strategic home navigation techniques.

Norma's success story reflects Helen Keller Services' commitment to ensuring vision loss doesn't limit anyone's ability to live fully and independently. Our comprehensive approach—combining clinical expertise, adaptive techniques, and emerging technologies—helps seniors maintain their cherished routines while embracing new ways to stay active and engaged in their communities.

Today, Norma continues to live independently in her home, preparing meals for herself, managing her own finances, and staying actively connected with family and friends.



FROM ADAPTIVE SKILLS TO PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT: MACARTHUR'S JOURNEY

MacArthur's journey began with Vision Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT), where he learned to use adaptive technologies to enhance his daily independence. Through orientation & mobility training, he also developed expert navigation skills for professional environments.

The TEAM (Technology, Employment, Achievement, and Mastery) Program marked a pivotal moment in MacArthur's professional development. "When I contemplate where I started my computer training journey many years ago, and the dreadful lack of knowledge and familiarity that I had about using computers, I am extremely gratified," MacArthur reflects. "The TEAM training program was the proverbial icing on the cake for me."

Through comprehensive training in Microsoft Windows applications and JAWS screen reading software, MacArthur gained an intuitive understanding of digital workflows. His skills were put to immediate use during his Work Experience Training at NYC HRA/Department of Social Services, where he distinguished himself by synthesizing information for executive reports. His exceptional performance led to an opportunity at the NYC Department of Homeless Services, where he now serves as a Senior Administrative Analyst.

Today, MacArthur manages complex responsibilities including vendor communications, invoice processing, and database management. "I recently found myself spontaneously smiling while sitting at my desk," he shares. "I suddenly realized how quickly and deftly my fingers were dancing across the keyboard as I shifted from Excel to online databases, copying and pasting data, downloading and saving documents, and notating the results on the spreadsheets."

"If I am brimming with self-assurance and pride in my acquired abilities using the PC, I owe much of my gratitude to [my instructors] for patiently guiding me along the path to this point," he says. MacArthur's story demonstrates how HKSB's comprehensive support services can transform challenges into opportunities for professional excellence. As he concludes, "Confucius once said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with one single step. I am fully confident that my participation in the TEAM training was one of those integral steps."

REDISCOVERING HIS VOICE: KEVIN'S PROGRESS THROUGH THE TEAM PROGRAM



Some might assume for Kevin S, vision loss could have meant the end of his broadcasting goals. Instead, it became the beginning of an unexpected but remarkable professional transformation. When Kevin joined Helen Keller Services for the Blind's TEAM Program, he was rebuilding his future. Working closely with TEAM Program specialists, Kevin learned to navigate the digital workplace using JAWS screen reader technology, Microsoft Office, and Zoom. These technical capabilities restored his professional confidence.

"Under their tutelage, I learned the skills to navigate the internet, Zoom Workplace & Microsoft Office as a visually impaired individual," Kevin shares. "Not only did these skills have an immediate impact in enhancing my confidence level, but they proved invaluable in my pursuit of employment."

While still enrolled in TEAM classes, Kevin's determination led him to participate in our Work Experience Training Program, where he secured an internship at his local public library. Within just six months, he achieved his civil service certification and was appointed as a Community Service Information Assistant. Today, Kevin produces and hosts the library's first-ever podcast, elegantly combining his broadcasting background with his newly acquired technical expertise.

Kevin's journey embodies Helen Keller Services for the Blind's mission to provide comprehensive support that leads to meaningful employment. Through HKSB's TEAM Program, Work Experience Training, and job placement services, Kevin gained the technical skills and confidence to advance in his career. His success – from mastering adaptive technology to securing civil service certification to launching an innovative library podcast – demonstrates how HKSB's coordinated approach to vocational training creates pathways to professional achievement. Kevin has not only found employment; he's creating new ways to serve his community.



Accessibility Symposium & Awards

The 2024 Virtual Accessibility Symposium & Awards marked a milestone in our mission to advance accessibility, reaching an audience of over 3,000 viewers worldwide. This groundbreaking event brought together industry leaders, technology experts, and advocates to explore how accessibility drives innovation, enhances customer experiences, and contributes to a more equitable society.

The event featured distinguished speakers including Sumaira Latif, Company Accessibility Leader at Procter & Gamble; Beth Foor, Corporate Affairs at Kellanova; and Joe Strechay, an

award-winning film and television producer and consultant on Netflix's "All the Light We Cannot See." A highlight of our symposium was the AccessAbility Awards ceremony, recognizing companies that have made exceptional strides in prioritizing accessibility across their products, services, and organizations. This year's distinguished award recipients included United Airlines, Apple, LEGO, Meloway Makeup, Be My Eyes, Rival, and The Viscardi Center.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Webinar

Our annual NDEAM webinar, "Full STEAM Ahead," drew over 318 participants eager to explore how emerging technologies are transforming workplace opportunities for blind and DeafBlind professionals. Aligned with the U.S. Department of Labor's theme "Access to Good Jobs for All," this year's panel shared powerful insights about breaking barriers in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) fields, emphasizing how self-advocacy and practical workplace strategies drive professional success.

Through personal journeys and professional expertise, these industry leaders demonstrated how emerging technologies and innovative approaches are creating unprecedented career opportunities in high-demand sectors, reinforcing our commitment to preparing participants for the evolving workforce of tomorrow.



THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY MARKET IS EXPECTED TO REACH \$8.2 BILLION BY 2026

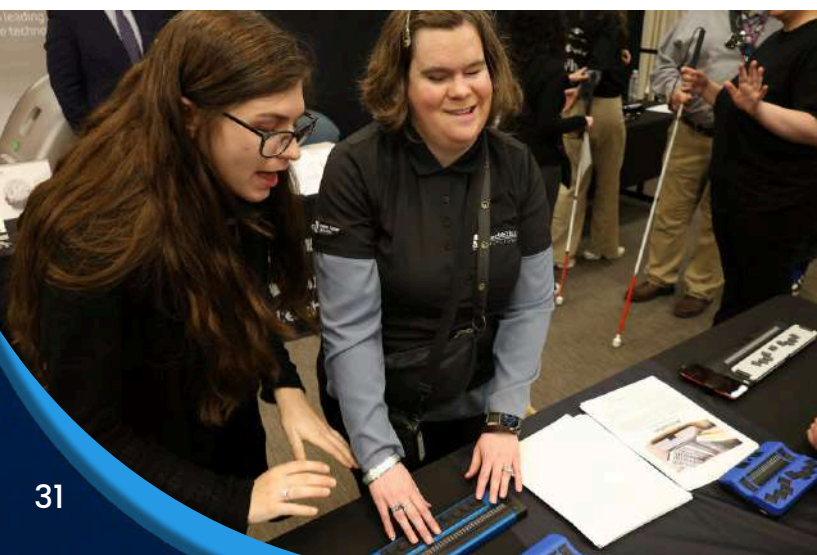


TECH BLITZ 2024

Unlocking the Future of Assistive Technology

Helen Keller Services' Tech Blitz event at Helen Keller National Center brought together members of the blind, DeafBlind, and low vision communities for an inspiring day of innovation and connection. The event showcased cutting-edge assistive technologies from leading vendors, creating an engaging environment where attendees could explore and test new devices designed to enhance independence and communication. The phenomenal turnout and enthusiastic participation from both vendors and community members made the event a resounding success.

Among the groundbreaking innovations featured were the Tatum Robotics T1 robotic hand and Bellman & Symfon's signaling devices, demonstrating how emerging technologies are transforming daily life for individuals in the community. The event fostered valuable connections between technology developers and users, leading to ongoing collaborations and feedback loops that will shape future innovations in assistive technology. Most importantly, Tech Blitz empowered attendees with knowledge about available tools and resources, helping them make informed decisions about which technologies could best support their independence and daily activities.



ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC



The 33rd Annual Helen Keller Services Golf Classic marked another successful year, raising over \$115,000 to support our essential programs and services. The event brought together our dedicated community of supporters for a day of friendly competition and meaningful engagement, demonstrating the continued strength of our partnerships and the generosity of our donors. A truly memorable highlight was the participation of Alex Notte, a DeafBlind individual who first connected with Helen Keller National Center in 2009 and later attended our Young Adult Summer Program in 2014. Despite being DeafBlind and facing developmental challenges affecting his coordination, and after a local golf pro recognized his potential, Alex embraced golf with remarkable determination.

Alex's warm personality and infectious enthusiasm lit up this year's tournament as he connected with fellow players. Beyond the greens, Alex has channeled his passion for golf into entrepreneurship, founding Bogey Golf Gifts, which creates unique golf-themed products. As a special touch to this year's event, every tournament participant received a pair of custom golf socks, adding a meaningful connection to this inspiring story.





SANDS POINT GARDEN CLUB

On the Sands Point campus, a vibrant sensory garden provides a unique space where HKNC participants explore nature through touch, smell, and taste. For over 14 years, the Sands Point Garden Club has carefully cultivated this special space, creating an accessible environment that enriches our participants' experience.

The garden serves as both a teaching environment and a place of respite, where carefully selected herbs and plants offer DeafBlind individuals opportunities to connect with the natural world. Under the Garden Club members' stewardship, the space has evolved into a meaningful part of our participants' experience at HKNC.

In June, the Garden Club hosted their annual spring tasting event, where members shared their culinary expertise with HKNC participants using herbs grown in the garden. Participants explored the garden's botanical variety and enjoyed hors d'oeuvres crafted from freshly harvested herbs. The Club thoughtfully provided recipes in braille and large print for participants to engage with the recipes and ingredients in their Independent Living classes and in their home communities.

The Sands Point Garden Club members have become valued partners in HKNC's mission. Their dedication to maintaining an accessible and engaging garden demonstrates the impact of meaningful community partnerships. The garden enriches our campus and we're grateful to these remarkable members of the Sands Point Garden Club who, season after season, help create moments discovery for our participants.





In September, The Helen Keller National Center unveiled its newly renovated Independent Living kitchen, marking the occasion with a festive ribbon-cutting ceremony and a unique NY bagel-making experience for DeafBlind participants. This state-of-the-art facility, featuring four fully adapted stations with accessibility features including accessible stoves, ovens, microwaves, and specialized tools, is a vital component of HKNC's Comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

To celebrate the grand reopening, HKNC welcomed Sam "The Bagel Guy" Silverman from Bagelup and his partner Reva Castillenti, who led an engaging bagel-making workshop. DeafBlind participants had the opportunity to create authentic New York bagels from scratch. The event was a hands-on and tactile learning experience for the participants, who eagerly dove into every step of the bagel-making process. They learned how to make the dough, cut and roll the bagels, boil them, add seasonings, and finally, bake them to perfection. This renovation represents HKNC's ongoing commitment to providing cutting-edge facilities that empower DeafBlind individuals to achieve greater independence and self-sufficiency in their daily lives.



DELOITTE – IMPACT DAY



Building Community Through Corporate Partnership: Deloitte Impact Day

In a powerful demonstration of corporate citizenship and inclusive community building, Helen Keller National Center welcomed Deloitte professionals to our Sands Point campus for their annual Impact Day in June 2024.

The initiative brought together dozens of Deloitte volunteers with HKNC staff and DeafBlind participants for a campus beautification project. Teams worked side by side to plant colorful flower gardens, refresh garden beds with mulch, and revitalize the essential walking track used by HKNC participants. This project was one of 1,200 social impact initiatives Deloitte led across 100 U.S. cities during their National Day of Service.

What made this partnership particularly meaningful was its emphasis on inclusive collaboration. As Maricar Marquez, HKNC's Supervisor of Independent Living who is DeafBlind, explained through tactile sign language: "We have to work together because I can't see what's in front of me. Other individuals let me know the information, like what color a flower is, and we work as a team."

The day demonstrated how effective communication and shared purpose can transcend perceived barriers. Deloitte professionals learned to work alongside DeafBlind individuals, gaining firsthand experience in inclusive practices while making a tangible difference to our campus environment.

This collaboration with Deloitte represents the kind of meaningful corporate partnerships that strengthen our ability to serve the DeafBlind community while creating opportunities for greater understanding and inclusion in the corporate world. Through initiatives like Impact Day, we continue to build bridges between communities. This collaboration exemplified how strategic partnerships can create meaningful change while fostering understanding and connection between the corporate and DeafBlind communities.



We were honored to welcome members of Ernst & Young US to the Helen Keller National Center during their annual EY Connect Day!

The EY team experienced HKNC's comprehensive approach to vocational rehabilitation firsthand during a tour of our training facilities. In our Adaptive Technology Department, they witnessed participants engaging with cutting-edge assistive technologies, while our Communications Learning Center provided fascinating insights into braille and other adaptive communication methods. The visit featured vibrant discussions with HKNC participants and staff, where they shared valuable insights about workplace experiences, accommodation strategies, and fostering an inclusive environment.

Did you know? EY's commitment to disability inclusion runs deep in their DNA - their co-founder Arthur Young was Deaf and had low vision. Unable to practice law due to his hearing loss, Young's entrepreneurial spirit led him to help shape the modern accounting profession.

Today, EY continues this legacy through their AccessAbilities professional network, which enables people of diverse abilities to do their best work and helps build the highest-performing teams. Their recent launch of the AccessAbilities Assistant Fund further demonstrates their ongoing commitment to workplace inclusion.

Through meaningful exchanges about workplace success stories, overcoming challenges, and creating a true sense of belonging, this visit exemplified how corporate partnerships can advance disability inclusion for building a #BetterWorkingWorld. Thank you, EY, for your ongoing partnership and dedication to building an accessible future for all!



Our annual 5K Run/Walk brought together over 250 participants at the beautiful Sands Point Preserve and the Helen Keller National Center campus on November 3rd, 2024. The morning was filled with energy and community spirit as runners and walkers gathered to support Helen Keller Services.

The event successfully raised funds for Camp Helen Keller, our summer program on Long Island that serves children who are blind or have low vision at no costs to their families. Thank you to our sponsors: CCP Office Technology Solutions, Innovative Venture Partners, DARE YOU, Chief Graphix, SMG Accountants Bookkeepers & Advisors, and the Baking Coach.

A big shout out to our community partners who enhanced the event experience, with Bach to Rock performing at the finish line, Jersey Mike's providing sandwiches for the runners and walkers, and Bagel Time donating dozens of bagels. The Baking Coach showcased their inclusive baking kits, while the Guide Dog Foundation offered demonstrations throughout the morning. Many local organizations also contributed wonderful items to our raffle baskets.

Participants of all abilities came together to support our mission. The family-friendly event featured multiple award categories and exciting raffle prizes for all to enjoy. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who participated, volunteered, sponsored, and supported this successful event.





THE TEPPER FAMILY FOUNDATION AUDIOLOGY SUITE RENOVATION

The Tepper Legacy: Enhancing Lives at HKNC

Through an extraordinary gift from the Tepper Family Foundation, Helen Keller National Center has inaugurated a state-of-the-art audiology suite, advancing excellence in audiological care. This visionary support also extends to Helen Keller Services for the Blind's technology initiatives, expanding access to essential adaptive equipment for program participants across our organization.

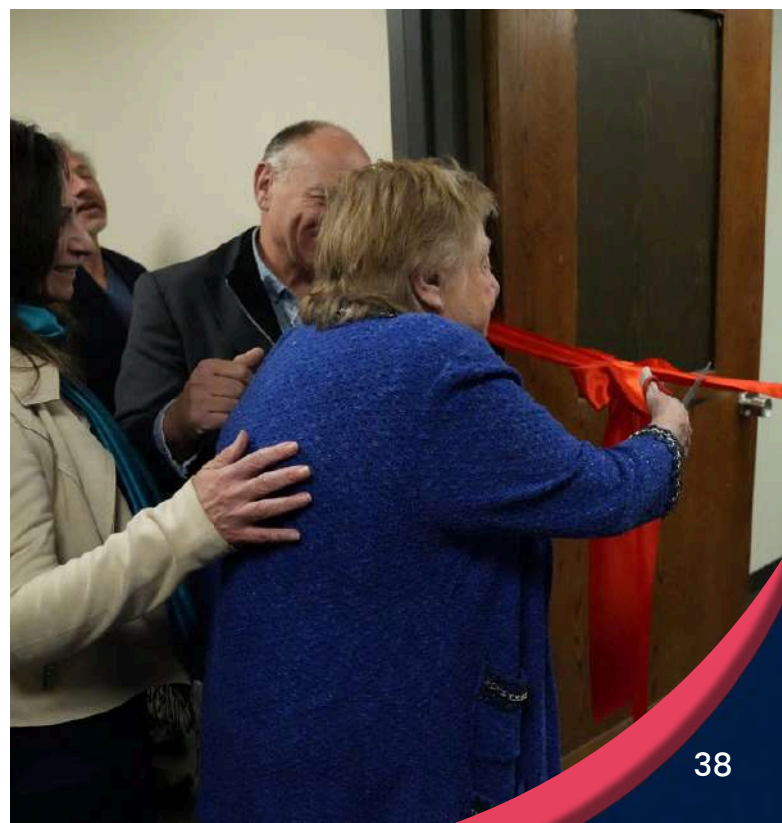
For many in our DeafBlind community, maximizing residual hearing is crucial for independence, safety, and communication. The comprehensive renovation provides HKNC with cutting-edge diagnostic and treatment capabilities, ensuring we can deliver the highest standard of personalized audiological care that helps individuals thrive in their daily lives.

Creating Lasting Impact

The Tepper Family's commitment to Helen Keller Services exemplifies the profound difference philanthropic partnerships can make in advancing our mission. Their support will touch countless lives for years to come, helping those we serve enhance their connection to the world around them. We were honored to welcome Elise Tepper, Ed Tepper, and Jacqueline Tepper to HKNC in November for the ribbon-cutting ceremony of this vital new facility.

"This renovation ensures that individuals who are DeafBlind have access to the highest quality audiological care, enhancing their independence and community engagement."

-Dr. Susan Ruzenski, CEO, Helen Keller Services





HKS IN THE NEWS

In 2024, Helen Keller Services captured the attention of major news outlets, bringing our mission to millions of viewers and readers. From CBS News featuring DeafBlind golfer Alex Notte at our Annual Golf Classic, to Newsday covering our "Seeing Differently" tactile art exhibition, these stories showcased our community's remarkable achievements.

Media coverage plays a vital role in challenging public perceptions while demonstrating how accessibility and inclusion strengthen communities. Each news feature expands awareness of our services and inspires others by showing what's possible when individuals receive the support they need to thrive.



News 12 Brooklyn

‘Tis the season: Santa makes official first stop at Helen Keller Services for the Blind



CBS New York

HKS Tech Blitz Event Highlighting the Impact of Assistive Technology



News12 Brooklyn

Children’s Learning Center Graduation “Oh, The Places They’ll go”



CBS News New York

HKS Golf Classic: Meet a Special Golfer who Exemplifies Determination



NewsDay TV

Exhibit at the Art Guild in Manhasset Encourages Visitors to Touch Works Created By DeafBlind Artists



News12 Long Island

Helen Keller National Center Unveils Newly Renovated IL Kitchen with a NY Bagel-Making Celebration



Forbes

Helen Keller Services Accessibility Symposium and United Airlines’ Recognition Featured in Forbes



News12 Long Island

Helen Keller Services: Helen’s 5k Run / Walk in Sands Point Preserve



IMPACT THROUGH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

For over a century, Helen Keller Services has advanced independence for individuals who are blind, DeafBlind, or have low vision through innovation, education and advocacy. Today, strategic partnerships amplify our impact across communities nationwide. We invite organizations to join us through:

Corporate Leadership & Innovation

- Champion signature events and programs (Tech Blitz, Teen Tech, TEAM)
- Drive digital accessibility through technology collaborations
- Support research and development initiatives
- Gain recognition as an accessibility leader

Workforce Development & Engagement

- Create inclusive hiring pathways
- Provide professional mentorship
- Customize volunteer programs
- Build disability awareness through direct engagement

Program Investment & Legacy

- Fund initiatives aligned with your priorities
- Establish named facilities or endowments
- Support expansion of essential services
- Enable technology and equipment access

Awareness & Community Impact

- Amplify inclusion through cause marketing
- Support national awareness campaigns
- Participate in matched giving programs
- Share expertise through workshops

Contact our Development team at development@helenkeller.org to explore partnership opportunities that advance independence for the blind and DeafBlind community while aligning with your organizational goals.



Feeling Through Studio is a groundbreaking educational platform born from the success of Doug Roland's Oscar-nominated film "Feeling Through" - the first film ever to feature a DeafBlind actor in a leading role. This innovative collaboration with Helen Keller Services, made possible through generous support from the New York Community Trust, The Lavelle Fund for the Blind, and private donations, transforms disability education by providing authentic learning experiences led directly by members of the DeafBlind and broader disability communities.

Built with accessibility at its core through partnership with Rival LA, the virtual platform features enhanced video capabilities including customizable ASL and transcript boxes, while meeting rigorous accessibility standards for navigation and screen readers. Educational content is organized into navigable chapters, ensuring all learners can engage with material at their own pace.

The platform has gained significant traction in educational settings, with UCLA's Disability Studies program integrating it into their curriculum to provide students with deeper understanding of disability perspectives. And at the prestigious NIB National Conference, CEO Sue Ruzenski joined Roland and other disability advocates to showcase the documentary in a special screening and discuss how the new learning platform is impacting DeafBlind representation and understanding.

Roland and HKS continue to collaborate with targeted outreach to disseminate the platform among Vocational Rehabilitation partners, businesses, as well as college and high school classrooms as a learning tool to expand awareness and understanding of working with and hiring individuals who are DeafBlind.

If you are interested in learning more about our plans to expand the platform to be inclusive of other diverse disability communities, or to gain knowledge firsthand from the DeafBlind community members who have authored and contributed to the content and shared their lived experiences, please contact us at feelingthrough@helenkeller.org.

To view the Feeling Through Studio trailer, visit: bit.ly/FTS-Trailer.

"Feeling Through Studio is a revolutionary platform that has enriched our Disability Studies curriculum tremendously at UCLA, giving students a deeper understanding of disability that will stay with them in any venture they pursue post college."

- Caitlin J. Solone, Ph.D., Academic Administrator, Disability Studies UCLA



EXPANDING HORIZONS: A NEW PRESCHOOL ON LONG ISLAND

The success of our Children's Learning Center in Downtown Brooklyn has created both inspiration and urgency. As our Brooklyn location grows, we recognize that many Long Island families face long commutes or cannot access our vital early intervention and specialized preschool services. This geographic barrier means children who could benefit from our proven early intervention model may miss crucial developmental windows.

To address this pressing need, Helen Keller Services is embarking on our most ambitious expansion: establishing a new preschool on Long Island. This new location will bring our comprehensive early education model—which has transformed countless young lives in Brooklyn—to Long Island families. The preschool will feature specialized classrooms, state-of-the-art adaptive technology, and therapeutic play areas. Our multidisciplinary team—including teachers of the visually impaired, speech therapists, occupational therapists and physical therapists—will work together to give children the strongest possible start in life.

This expansion will transform preschool services for Long Island's children who are blind or have low vision, as well as multiple disabilities, autism, Down syndrome, or pervasive developmental delays, ensuring support is available when and where families need it most. Research shows that early intervention services for children with visual impairments dramatically improve outcomes across all developmental domains.

Through strategic partnerships, community support, and philanthropic vision, we can build an enduring legacy ensuring every child who is blind or has low vision on Long Island has the opportunity to thrive from their earliest years. The expansion of our proven model to Long Island will ensure specialized education and support are available where families need them most.

\$550,000+

Helen Keller Services extends our deepest gratitude to The Tepper Family Foundation for their extraordinary contribution to our organization.



Jacqueline Tepper, Elise Tepper and Ed Tepper

\$200,000+

The Estate of Eugene V. Seymour Trust
Estate of Gloria Diakow

\$150,000- 50,000

Estate of Christine Ricciardo
The Estate of Eugene J. Cozzolino
Wasily Family Foundation
Helen Hoffritz Charitable Trust
Sarah DeCoizart Perpetual Charitable Trust
Eugene H. Luntz 2007 Trust
Mr. Theodore Utchen

\$49,999- \$25,000

Cleveland Foundation
J.E. & Z.B. Butler Foundation
Marjorie C. Adams Charitable Trust
National Grid Foundation

\$24,999 - \$10,000

Esther and Harold Mertz Foundation
Mr. John Fogarty and Mrs. Eleanor Fogarty
Horace A. Moses TUA-INDL Home
Kay Family Foundation, Inc.
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The Estate of Ralph Mark Sampson
The Fay J. Lindner Foundation
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William G. & Helen C. Hoffman Foundation
Zeitz Foundation

\$9,999 - \$5,000

AKAM Associates, Inc.
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Harding Educational and Charitable Foundation
Herrschaft Marion B Foundation
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\$4,999 - \$1,000

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\$4,999 - \$1,000 (Continued)

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Electrical Contracting Solutions (ECS)
The Eli Salig Charitable Trust
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Mr. Wayde Harrison and Ms. Bonnie Erickson
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Sebco Laundry Systems, Inc.
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Dr. Kala Sury
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Foundation
Troy Land Development Group
USI Insurance Services
Victoria Loconsolo Foundation, Inc.
Von Seebeck Charitable Trust
W.J. Northridge Construction Corp.
Wilhelmina Parris Family Limited
Partnership
Windsor Park Owners Corp. Charity Fund
Xinos Construction Corp
Ms. Cheryl Zagoria

\$999 - \$500

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BNY Mellon Community Impact
Brotherhood of the Community Synagogue
Allison and Peter Burrows
Scott Clayton
The Honorable Miriam Cyrulnik
Ms. Alice Delaney and Ms. May C. Brown
Mr. Thomas DeMartini
Amy Dombroski
Mr. Kai Duhn
Sylvia Fink
Gensler
Global Infrastructure Management, LLC
Mr. Joshua Goldman
Mr. David Goldstein
Jackson Lewis LLP
Mr. Vello Kitt

\$999 - \$500 (Continued)

Dr. James M. Klancnik, Jr. and Ms. Nicole Eustace
Ms. Lori Kranczer
Mr. Edward Meckeneck
National Society Southern Dames of America,
Illinois Society
Mr. Jimmy Y. Peress
Mr. and Mrs. Paul O. Richard
Ms. Renonia Ruffin
Dr. Susan Ruzenski
Schwab Charitable Fund
Ms. Susan D. Shapiro
Dr. David Smith
Guarna Stella
Stop & Stor Charitable Fund
Mr. Michael Tanney
Tatum Robotics
The Bahnik Foundation, Inc.
UsableNet
Ms. Rosemary Wakeman
Wantagh Island Trees Lions Club
Mr. Joseph Wekselblatt
Mrs. Maxine H. Zinder

Mr. Antonio Guimaraes
Ms. Rebecca Heitkam
Ariel Hsieh
Imperial Bag & Paper
Kaivaan
Mr. and Mrs. Baik H. Kang
Ms. Maria Keeler
Mr. Vikas Khandelwal
META (FACEBOOK) Payments
Mrs. Hildegard Oker-Bogle
Oticon, Inc.
Ms. Barbara Peterson
Ms. Cara Petruccelli
Principal Financial
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Ricci
and Mrs.
Ms. Rosalind Rubler
Dr. Julian A. Seewald Charitable Fund
Mr. Sanamjit Singh
SMUSHT, LLC
Sound Room Solutions, Inc.
St. Robert Bellarmine Knights of Columbus
8969
Ms. Judith Sternberg
Mr. Frederick Strobel
Mr. Bala R. Subramanyam & Family
Mr. Stephen J. Trachtulec
United Way of Long Island
United Way Suncoast
Mr. Ira Warren

\$499 - \$250

ACANSA Investment Management Group, LLC
Mr. Nikos Andreadis
James Bier
Brooklyn Metropolis Lions Club, Inc.
Cambium Learning, Inc.
Mr. Trenton Commins
Cullen and Dykman LLP
Mr. Blaise Delahoussaye
Dream Vision Group LLC
Ms. Shirley Einser
Electronix Systems
Elevator Refurbishing Corp.
Mr. Fred Enzler
Focused Wealth Management
Givinga Foundation, Inc.
Ms. Wendy Glatt
L Griffiths

FINANCIALS

Helen Keller Services
Statement of Financial Position
June 30, 2024

ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 5,548,064
Grants receivable	2,000,328
Program fees and accounts receivable, net	5,351,735
Investments	85,553,685
Other assets	834,219
Total current assets	99,288,031
Investments	10,462,448
Right to use assets - operating	26,904,690
Property and equipment, net	11,768,098
Investment in trusts	2,504,923
Total assets	<u>\$ 150,928,190</u>

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS**Current Liabilities**

Accounts payable and accrued expense	\$ 4,060,287
Contract liability	421,404
Current portion of operating lease liabilities	1,067,553
Other current liabilities	56,273
Total current liabilities	5,605,517
Refundable deposits	108,767
Operating lease liabilities, net of current portion	31,698,751
Total liabilities	37,413,035

Net Assets

Without donor restrictions	109,258,110
With donor restrictions	
Time and purpose restricted	1,300,287
Perpetual trusts	2,505,413
Endowment funds	451,345
Total net assets with donor restrictions	4,257,045
Total net assets	113,515,155
Total liabilities and net assets	<u>\$ 150,928,190</u>

FINANCIALS

**Helen Keller Services
Statement of Activities
Year Ended June 30, 2024**

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
Revenues, Gains, and Other Support			
Contributions	\$ 1,631,868	\$ 281,619	\$ 1,913,487
Legacies	737,499	-	737,499
Special events			
Gross receipts	68,622	-	68,622
Less direct donor benefits	(68,762)	-	(68,762)
Total public support	2,369,227	281,619	2,650,846
National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults - grant income	24,870,312	-	24,870,312
Helen Keller Services for the Blind - grant income	773,075	-	773,075
Training fees and allowance	12,305,636	-	12,305,636
Total fees and grants from government agencies	37,949,023	-	37,949,023
Rental income			
Gross receipts	841,532	-	841,532
Less direct costs	(298,868)	-	(298,868)
Interest and dividend income	2,527,941	-	2,527,941
Miscellaneous	234,916	-	234,916
Total other revenue	3,305,521	-	3,305,521
Net assets released from restrictions	774,943	(774,943)	-
Total revenues, gains, and other support	44,398,714	(493,324)	43,905,390

FINANCIALS

**Helen Keller Services
Statement of Activities
Year Ended June 30, 2024**

(Continued)

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
Expenses			
Comprehensive services	\$ 5,398,684	\$ -	\$ 5,398,684
Day habilitation services	2,907,093	-	2,907,093
Children's Learning Center	4,132,640	-	4,132,640
Summer camp	227,411	-	227,411
National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults	20,006,136	-	20,006,136
National Center on DeafBlindness	2,126,469	-	2,126,469
Residential	1,012,767	-	1,012,767
Total program services	35,811,200	-	35,811,200
Management and general	5,773,999	-	5,773,999
Fundraising	1,645,680	-	1,645,680
Total support services	7,419,679	-	7,419,679
Total expenses	43,230,879	-	43,230,879
Change in Net Assets before net investment return	1,167,835	(493,324)	674,511
Net investment return	8,853,037	186,607	9,039,644
Change in Net Assets	10,020,872	(306,717)	9,714,155
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	99,237,238	4,563,762	103,801,000
Net Assets, End of Year	\$ 109,258,110	\$ 4,257,045	\$ 113,515,155



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