



Vermont Association for the  
Blind and Visually Impaired

Dear Friends,

As you may know, the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI) was founded in 1926 to enable blind and visually impaired Vermonters to be more independent, cultivate adaptive skills, and improve their quality of life. Today, nearly one hundred years later, we remain committed to our mission and plan to provide services well into the future.

To celebrate the anniversary of our founding, we are excited to announce VABVI's **Second Century Endowment Fund**. In addition to marking an impressive milestone in our organization's history, this campaign seeks to fully fund a program whose importance will only increase in the coming years. This mailing includes all the information you need about the campaign's fundraising goal, a unique **matching gift opportunity**, and the **SMART Device Training Program** which the campaign seeks to fully fund.

We at VABVI are so grateful for a near-century of support from the local community we serve. Whether you are a client, donor, volunteer, board member, or otherwise involved with the organization, we greatly appreciate your participation in our good work. From all of us at VABVI, **thank you**.

There is no better time to give than now. Please consider contributing to the VABVI Second Century Fund to help us ensure many more years of services to come.

Sincerely,

**Steve Pouliot**  
Executive Director



# Second Century Endowment Campaign

**Help us ensure services for all, for many years to come.**

Over its first five years of operation, The SMART Device Training Program has proven itself one of VABVI's most important services. This program aids our senior clients by providing them with personalized training, free of charge, in the comfort of their own homes. A large number of seniors who experience vision loss benefit from SMART services, which can range from convenient to genuinely life-saving. Given the aging population of the state, we anticipate the demand for SMART services will only increase in the coming years.

VABVI launched the Second Century Campaign in January 2023 in order to ensure the SMART Program's availability well into the future. The campaign's goal is to raise \$2 million to permanently fund SMART. While the program is currently partially funded by the state, permanent funding would grant VABVI the flexibility to serve clients without delay. Without permanent funding to meet an increase in demand, it is possible that VABVI would need to waitlist clients seeking access to SMART services.

Thanks to a generous \$500K donation from the Pizzagalli Family Foundation [PFF], longtime friend of VABVI and the SMART Program, we are already one-quarter of the way to permanent funding for SMART. Additionally, the PFF has offered a matching gift opportunity. For every \$2 raised by VABVI for the campaign, the PFF will contribute \$1, with additional funds up to \$500K.



The Pizzagalli Family Foundation's matching opportunity makes this the perfect time for you to maximize your charitable donation. The Second Century Fund's goal is within our reach, and every contribution brings us closer to permanent funding for SMART. Please consider supporting our services today!

You can donate using the provided envelope or through our website ([vabvi.org](http://vabvi.org)). Please contact (802) 863-1358 or [jthomas@vabvi.org](mailto:jthomas@vabvi.org) if you are interested in making a pledge up to 5 years.

\* Maximum Possible Gift

# What is SMART?

## Speakers Magnification Accessibility Reading Telecommunications

VABVI launched the SMART Device Training Program in 2018 for clients age 55 and over to help reduce the social isolation caused by visual impairment. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, the need for this program became even clearer than before. SMART continues to grow today as more people learn about the ways it can greatly enhance their lives.

Training is available on a wide range of assistive technology, including Android, Google, Amazon, and Apple smart devices and speakers, as well as technology more specific to the visually impaired such as magnifiers. In-home services make the training convenient and safe. Clients are assisted over several sessions, setting goals and tracking their progress with the help of their TVI (Teacher of the Visually Impaired). The overwhelming majority of SMART clients report satisfaction with the services provided, many considering them life-changing or even life-saving.

SMART clients learn:

- Accessibility features of technology
- Voice-operated commands to gather and send information
- Telecommunications, including the ability to gather information on the web, make phone calls, video conference, email, text message and use of social media
- Organizational planning (labeling, scheduling, reminders, filing, etc.)
- OCR technology (reading print material by taking a picture)
- How to receive emergency alerts
- How to manage finances, prescriptions
- How to use GPS and route planning.
- How to access healthcare via telehealth.

The SMART Device Training Program is available to any blind or visually impaired Vermont resident age 55 or above. The program served 405 clients in Fiscal Year 2022. We anticipate the need for SMART services to only increase in the coming years, given the state's aging population.

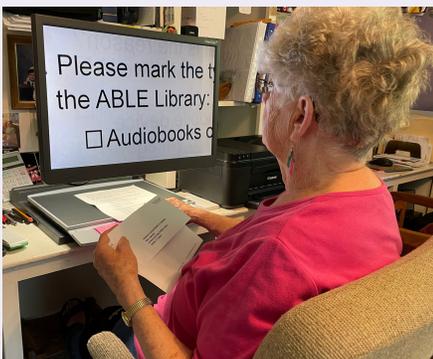


Image: SMART Ambassador Lois Green demonstrates using her magnification device to read a paper form.



Image: Barney Malone uses an electronic magnifier to better view a digital screen.

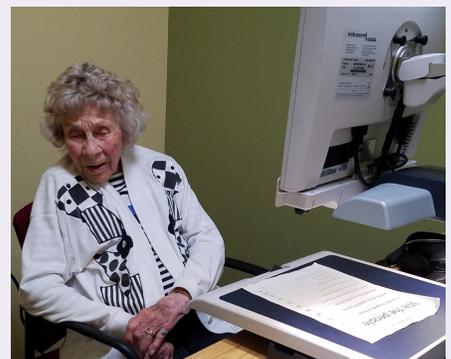


Image: A woman reads a document using magnifying technology.

# SMART Testimonials

A client learned that by placing two smart speakers in her home, she could access help if she had a medical emergency. Her speakers were programmed with the name and phone numbers of two sisters who lived in nearby towns. Two days later, the client had a medical emergency, called out the name of a sister, the sister very quickly contacted an ambulance and **the client's life was quite likely saved by having the smart speakers** in her home and being trained on how to use them.

A client, who writes poetry using her computer, was struggling to read her poetry at group readings with friends. With VABVI guidance, the client reached a solution using the VoiceOver feature on the iPhone. **The client was ecstatic and so grateful to be able to participate with her friends.**

A client has gone from never using a Smart device to owning an iPhone that she learned to use to go online, compose and send emails, to read her BARD books, [and order] her groceries online to be delivered! **That is a huge step in independence** for someone who has relied upon others to drive her to the shop.

A client had hearing loss in addition to vision loss. Her daughter was concerned that her mother was not able to use the phone and handle other tasks of daily living. VABVI helped the client secure an amplified Panasonic phone. The client was again able to use the phone to call her family. While the client was happy, **her family was even more excited to realize their mother could still do many things** with assistive technology.

"An 84 year old client... had lost his wife a few years earlier and couldn't view his family pictures anymore. The solution was a desktop electronic magnifier called a CCTV. I will never forget the look on his face as he began to smile and tear up. **Such a simple thing truly made all the difference in the world** to this man, that day."

- Daniel E. Norris, M. Ed. Supervisor of VABVI Adult Services

A client had transportation issues and mentioned coming across a new **transportation service** listed on Front Porch Forum. With her training, she found Front Porch Forum in her email and was able to independently access important information for a crucial need!