

ANNUAL REPORT

Driving Our Agenda Forward



INTRODUCTION

This annual report spotlights AFB's key accomplishments throughout the year, along with an overview of the organization's financial health. Our success would not have been possible without the generous support of our partners, donors, foundations, and allies who contribute each day toward making our mission and vision a reality.

MISSION

AFB creates equal opportunities and expands possibilities through advocacy, thought leadership, and strategic partnerships.

VISION

1. AFB is dedicated to changing how the world views blindness. We have a clear and comprehensive vision for how AFB and its strategic partners will help shape the future.
2. Coalitions of leaders and organizations will be unified to eliminate discriminatory barriers and institute policies, practices, and perceptions that result in equal access to opportunities.
3. The digital world will be welcoming to the blind community, with information and media accessible through a range of devices and software that enable a fully inclusive experience.
4. Employers will understand and value the capabilities and unique contributions of blind people, expanding access to rewarding careers and advancement opportunities.
5. Organizations across sectors (e.g., corporate, government, academic) will be equipped with the necessary knowledge, tools, and strategies to enable disability inclusion and accessibility.
6. Blind individuals will be able to move freely through the world, and innovations in transportation will be designed around accessibility.
7. AFB will continue to grow as a collaborative team of passionate and skilled professionals and trustees, committed to our mission and guided by our core values, as we create a world of equal opportunities.

A LETTER FROM AFB PRESIDENT AND CEO ERIC BRIDGES AND AFB CHAIR SARAH HERRLINGER



Eric Bridges
AFB President & CEO

The past fiscal year for the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) has been one of significant progress and forward momentum. When we began the year in July 2024, we were several months into implementing AFB's new strategic plan, a five-year roadmap designed to strengthen our leadership as we enter our second century of success.

Our plan centers on three key goals: expanding the transfer of knowledge about blindness and low vision, fostering collaboration as the leading convener in the field, and transforming the public perception of blindness. Together, these goals position AFB to drive positive change, dismantle misconceptions, and create greater opportunity for the more than 42 million Americans living with vision loss.



Sarah Herrlinger
AFB Chair

We began FY2025 at full speed. By July's end, our yearlong collaboration with Mattel culminated in the launch of Blind Barbie, a partnership that generated global attention and accelerated our efforts to promote positive representation of people who are blind or have low vision. This project underscored the power of collaboration to challenge stereotypes and harness the power of play to shape the perception of blindness for the next generation.

A YEAR OF MOMENTUM AND MEANING

Each achievement this year strengthens our foundation for lasting change, ensuring that innovation and inclusion continue to move forward together.

That momentum continued into the fall with the announcement of a major grant from the Ford Foundation, supporting AFB's Public Policy and Research Institute. This investment fuels critical research into digital accessibility, including the first phase of our groundbreaking study on the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on people with disabilities. Released in January, this research provided valuable insights from industry, government, and nonprofit experts to identify consensus on key issues that can help guide industry leaders and policymakers as they navigate the future of AI technology.

As the year progressed, we also launched the AFB Scholars Program, made possible through the Lulu J. Alonso Scholarship Fund. This initiative provides substantial financial support, mentorship, and guidance for exceptional graduate and undergraduate students. Our inaugural class of four scholars embodies the promise of a new generation of changemakers who will one day take the wheel and lead in their respective fields of study.

Behind the scenes, we strengthened our operational infrastructure to ensure AFB remains agile and efficient. By fine-tuning internal systems and optimizing project management, we improved performance and collaboration across departments and extended the reach of every dollar invested in our mission. These improvements position AFB to deliver even greater impact in the years ahead.

As we reflect on FY2025, we do so with deep gratitude. The progress we achieved would not have been possible without the steadfast support of our donors, partners, and allies. Your belief in our mission fuels our success.

Looking ahead, we are driven by the same vision that has guided AFB for more than a century. We are thankful for all those who have traveled with us along the way and invite everyone to join us for the exciting journey that lies just beyond the horizon.

Sincerely,

ERIC BRIDGES
President & CEO

SARAH HERRLINGER
Chair, Board of Trustees

BLIND BARBIE BREAKS DOWN MISCONCEPTION, DRIVES POSITIVE NARRATIVE



As the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) looks ahead, one theme defines our work across every initiative: possibility. From reshaping representation to redefining technology and reimagining leadership, AFB is driving an agenda that envisions a world where inclusion and equality are not just goals but lived realities.

At the forefront of our work in this space is AFB's professional services division. AFB's professional services work with clients in the real world, supporting them in making their products or services more accessible. It's a critical element for building and bolstering our strategic partnerships to advance our mission and vision.

This vision became tangible during FY2025 when AFB announced its partnership with one of the world's leading promoters of play. In July 2024, Mattel introduced Blind Barbie to the global marketplace. This collaboration between AFB's professional services and Mattel built on the success of their Fashionista line of Barbie dolls, which features a wide range of dolls representing different cultures and abilities.

“Through this collaboration, we made major strides toward creating a positive narrative around blindness. So many of our perceptions and opinions about others are formed during our earliest years. And thanks to Mattel, we were able to portray a positive, independent, and frankly, a very cool and stylish image of a person who happens to be blind.”

— ERIC BRIDGES, AFB PRESIDENT & CEO

Drawing on AFB's more than 100 years of expertise, the Blind Barbie was crafted with authenticity and care, featuring tactile accessories, a white cane, and fashion that celebrates both functionality and style.



This initiative sparked conversation across the globe, inspiring young minds to see blindness not as a limitation but as part of the diverse human experience. More than a toy, Blind Barbie became a symbol of how AFB's partnerships can transform perception and move culture toward inclusion.

“Blind Barbie is a powerful reminder that when representation mirrors reality, the horizon of possibility expands for everyone.”

— STEPHANIE ENYART, AFB CHIEF PUBLIC POLICY & RESEARCH OFFICER

The partnership leveraged subject matter experts from across AFB, including research, marketing, and digital accessibility. Every aspect of accurate representation and inclusion was addressed, from the dexterity of her arms for using a cane to ensuring all marketing materials were fully accessible.

In the end, AFB contributed to the overall success of Blind Barbie. Within the first 48 hours of its launch, news of the release garnered over 2.8 billion impressions across the globe. It quickly became one of the top-selling dolls of the year. AFB has received countless stories from professionals and consumers who are blind, proudly displaying their own Blind Barbie as a sign of pride in their identity.

“Misconceptions of blindness remain one of the greatest hurdles we encounter in society,” said Tony Stephens, AFB assistant vice president for communications. “Thanks to the support and backing of Mattel’s robust marketing and communications, we were able to have a truly global reach promoting a much more authentic representation of blindness — one that will be long-lasting as children grow into adulthood and take with them the experiences that will form future perceptions and opinions of people with disabilities.”

To make Blind Barbie as accessible as possible, AFB received a generous donation of the physical dolls from Mattel and is working to distribute them to elementary students who are both sighted and blind or have low vision.

AFB SCHOLARS PROGRAM SETS UP SUCCESS



With a focus on our future, the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) announced in early 2025 that it would launch a new program for college and university students who are blind. Known as the AFB Scholars Program, this new opportunity for students pursuing higher education provides substantial financial support, along with additional mentoring and learning opportunities for students to grow as future leaders in their respective fields of study.

“The AFB Scholars program offers a transformative opportunity for blind students. These new scholarships will turn the dreams of many exceptional students into reality for years to come.”

— ERIC BRIDGES, AFB PRESIDENT & CEO

The scholarship awards will be available for graduate and undergraduate students who meet the qualifications for legal blindness. The maximum available amount is \$20,000 for undergraduate students and \$28,000 for graduate students.

The newly established awards through the AFB Scholars Program are in addition to AFB’s current offerings of scholarships awarded in partnership with the American Council of the Blind (ACB).

“A great aspect of this new scholarship program is that students will also gain access to successful blind professionals as mentors and have the opportunity to join AFB at its annual Leadership Conference. This demonstrates AFB’s commitment to ensuring students are set up for success in their chosen fields of study.”

— MATTHEW JANUSAUSKAS, AFB CHIEF TECHNOLOGY & PROGRAMS OFFICER



This past June, AFB announced its first class of scholars in the program, granting scholarships to four outstanding students who are blind. Three of the students are attending graduate studies, while the fourth is an incoming undergraduate freshman. Each scholar is paired with a member of AFB's leadership team who also has lived experience of blindness and will serve as a mentor for the scholars as they progress through the program.

The newly launched AFB Scholars Program is made possible through the generous support of the Lulu J. Alonso Scholarship Fund. Named in memory of Lulu J. Alonso, a teacher of the visually impaired and professor emerita at Michigan State University, the endowed gift will provide multiple substantial scholarships in perpetuity. As a result of the gift, AFB has established an advisory group and a selection committee and will provide program support for the scholarships to be awarded.



LEARN MORE

For more information about the AFB Scholars Program, visit www.afb.org/scholarships.

AFB'S GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH CHARTS COURSE FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

In January 2025, the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) drove forward into another frontier, launching the first phase of its artificial intelligence research through AFB's Public Policy and Research Institute (PPRI). This study examined how AI can both positively and negatively impact people with disabilities. Together, this research offers a roadmap for developers and policymakers to embed inclusion at the core of technological innovation.

The research consisted of in-depth interviews with 32 experts in artificial intelligence. Participants came from a wide range of backgrounds, including voices from the tech industry, related advocacy nonprofits, and government leaders. The study identified key areas of consensus on how AI will impact people with disabilities.

"Through our in-depth interviews, we were able to identify the most significant opportunities and issues that all of our experts could agree upon. This agreement offers us a clear path forward on where we can gain the greatest momentum so as not to be left behind in the current AI revolution rapidly changing our world."

— STEPHANIE ENYART, AFB CHIEF PUBLIC POLICY & RESEARCH OFFICER





AFB’s findings underscore a simple truth: the technologies shaping tomorrow must work for everyone. By driving this conversation, AFB is ensuring that the concerns and needs of Americans with disabilities are not left on the side of the road. As AFB progresses into FY2026, PPRI’s research will continue with extensive quantitative and qualitative studies from both persons with and without disabilities, providing the most accurate insight into how the areas addressed in phase one of PPRI’s research are already being felt across our country.

“We are excited by the support we have received toward creating this groundbreaking research. Our findings will not only serve as a compass for the blind and low vision community, but will also serve the broader society as we all try to measure the impact that AI will have during these historic times.”

— DR. ARIELLE SILVERMAN, AFB DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH

SPECIAL THANKS

This critical research has been made possible through the support of the **Delta Gamma Foundation**, with additional thanks to the **Ford Foundation**.

AFB'S AWARD-WINNING DOCUMENTARY INSPIRES NEW VISION OF POSSIBILITIES

In 2025, the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) continued to take its message of independence and opportunity to the big screen, presenting its documentary film *Possibilities* at national and international film festivals across the globe.

Possibilities follows a series of powerful, real-world stories of individuals who are blind or have low vision. The film builds on Helen Keller's legacy, who spent over 44 years working at the American Foundation for the Blind, and finds echoes of her impact in the real stories of modern-day individuals who are blind, deafblind, or have low vision. Through their journeys, the film invites viewers to see blindness not as a limitation but as part of the diverse spectrum of human potential.

"Tomorrow, what possibilities there are in that word."

— HELEN KELLER



AFB's Tony Stephens at the Golden State Film Festival

The fiscal year began with *Possibilities* taking home the prize for Best Disability Feature at the Power 24 International Film Festival in Durban, South Africa. Two months later, AFB would take home the grand prize for Best Picture at the Champion's International Film Salon, a disability-focused film festival based in Texas. Then, in November, AFB's assistant vice president for communications, Tony Stephens, traveled to Corinth, Greece, for a screening and panel presentation at the Bridges International Film Festival.

Along the way, AFB received additional accolades for its film, which was presented at festivals from Santa Monica, California, to Budapest, Hungary.

The film's festival run could not have ended any better than it did, with AFB receiving the top documentary prize at the Garden State Film Festival in Asbury Park, New Jersey. The award was particularly special for the film's director, Bill Sarine, who grew up in New Jersey and was deeply moved by the recognition from independent



Director Bill Sarine at the Garden State Film Festival

film leaders in his home state, which has a strong legacy in independent cinema.

“From the beaches along the Jersey Shore to those all the way across the Atlantic in the Mediterranean Sea, it’s incredible to think just how many diverse audiences we were able to reach through the 14 festivals that recognized our film,” said Eric Bridges, AFB President and CEO. “We’re now focusing on securing digital distribution for the film so we can reach even more audiences across the globe – people who may have never even come in contact with a person who is blind, much less the legacy of Helen Keller.”

In addition to its successful run at festivals during the 2025 fiscal year, *Possibilities* enjoyed several additional screening events. Two of note include a special virtual screening for Google employees across the globe in October 2024. Then, *Possibilities* went down under for a special screening in Brisbane, Australia, at a conference for professionals in the blindness field throughout the South Pacific. The film’s successful run through the national and international festival circuit captured audiences’ attention and hearts, amplifying AFB’s mission to drive change and reimagine how the world perceives blindness.

For AFB, *Possibilities* represents more than cinematic success—it’s a storytelling milestone in advancing our agenda forward. By placing authentic voices at the forefront, AFB is shifting the cultural lens from what blindness takes away to what it contributes. Each screening sparked new partnerships, inspired educators and employers, and opened doors for dialogue on accessibility and opportunity.

As the film continues its journey, AFB looks toward an even broader horizon, bringing *Possibilities* to classrooms, boardrooms, and communities nationwide.

EXPLORE AFB’S AWARD-WINNING DOCUMENTARY

Stay updated on the latest news and screenings by visiting www.afb.org/possibilities.

NEWLY LAUNCHED PROJECT MANAGEMENT OFFICE PROPELS AFB'S MISSION AND VISION

The 2025 fiscal year at the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) witnessed a significant transformation in the way AFB manages its programs and projects. This new framework and way of working were the direct result of the goals established in the AFB strategic plan rolled out in December 2023. By the start of FY2025, AFB introduced the Project Management Office (PMO), the next in a series of steps designed to breathe life into the strategic plan, turning it from a series of documents on the shelf into a frequently referenced roadmap to success.



AFB Staff at the 2024 AFB Leadership Conference

At the core of any organization's success is a team of dedicated employees across multiple disciplines and areas of expertise working behind the scenes to deliver the vast array of contributions required to ensure that programs and projects meet their intended outcomes. Recognizing the value each team member brings to the successful achievement of our objectives, AFB found it critical to include in its five-year strategic plan a primary goal of creating a high-performing workplace where all employees can thrive.

A key stepping stone for this goal was to create a robust foundation for program and project management, one that breaks down

silos and allows the organization to work collaboratively across multiple projects without being tripped up by competing priorities.

"The new Project Management Office (PMO) has been an enormous resource for the entire organization. It provides the proper tools, processes, facilitation, and support to align staff efforts and gain traction in achieving our goals."

— SONYA SHIFLET, AFB CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER



As such, the newly launched PMO took multiple steps to calibrate the way departments work together, building upon many of the concepts introduced in the System & Soul operating system put into action at AFB two years prior. Our new way of working ensures that project and program goals, milestones, and key performance indicators are clearly defined, that resources are allocated, and that risks are mitigated. Collaboration is fostered through project team sprints and the use of tools such as Trello and shared drives to ensure transparency and accountability. Newly adopted time tracking helps ensure we understand and capture the true costs of programs and projects, as well as the staff capacity needed for implementation.

The result of these actions helped break down silos and fully leverage the talent that resides across the organization. A culture of collaboration and cooperation was fostered with buy-in from each member of the AFB team, combined with support and strategic direction given from the newly established position, Manager, AFB Project Portfolio.

“In doing so, AFB’s work product has been better and our achievements faster than ever. This would not have been possible in our previous ways of working together.”

— SONYA SHIFLET, AFB CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

AFB LEADERSHIP & STAFF

As of June 30, 2025

AFB SENIOR STAFF

Eric Bridges

President & CEO

Patsy Carvache

Vice President, Finance & Business Services

Stephanie Enyart

Chief Public Policy & Research Officer

Matthew Janusauskas

Chief Technology & Programs Officer

Pam McGonigle

Chief Development Officer

Sonya Shiflet

Chief Operating Officer

Anthony Stephens

Assistant Vice President, Communications

Judith Szabo

Manager, Executive Office

AFB TEAM

Sarahelizabeth Baguhn

Autumn Bice

Rebecca Burrichter

Hanna Fugulin

April Gardner

Kelly Gasque

Melody Goodspeed

Aubrey Green

Syed Hassan

Alexis Hubbard

Aziz Kabulniyazov

Breanna Kerr

Haley Linville

Sarah Malaier

Timothy Meadows

Ronak Patel

Aaron Preece

Kristin Reuschel

Pris Rogers

Lisa Santamarina

Arielle Silverman

Stacy Sporie

Eric Ulbrich

Andrew Worley

Diane Wright

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

As of June 30, 2025

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Jamie Dean

Sr. Corporate Counsel, Accessibility Regulation
Microsoft

Diane L. Fazzi, Ph.D.

Associate Vice President for Special Projects, Faculty Affairs
California State University, Los Angeles

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Sr. VP, Retired
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Theodore S. Francavilla

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James Hands

Chief Financial and Operating Officer
The Seeing Eye

Melanie Lockwood Herman

Executive Director
Nonprofit Risk Management Center

Kiran Kaja

Principal Accessibility Product Manager
Amazon

Dan Kelly

President and CEO
IFB Solutions

Macy Lamb

Regulatory Sr. Manager
Oncor

Janni Lehrer-Stein

Attorney, Retired

Matthew Sherwood

Chief Executive Officer
WeVidIt Media, Inc.

Harshil Ved

Accessibility Product Support Manager
Google

Victoria Watts

Founder and CEO
CyR.U.S.

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

June 30, 2025, With Summarized Comparative Information for 2024

Amounts Expressed In Thousands

| ASSETS | 2025 | 2024 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| Cash and Cash Equivalents | \$2,343 | \$693 |
| Accounts Receivable, Net | 79 | 32 |
| Contributions Receivable, Net | 95 | 190 |
| Interest and Dividend Receivable | 62 | 61 |
| Investments | 39,395 | 35,285 |
| Prepaid Expenses And Other Assets | 218 | 193 |
| Property And Equipment, Net | 16 | 59 |
| Total Assets | \$42,208 | \$36,513 |
| LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS | | |
| Liabilities | | |
| Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses | \$327 | \$366 |
| Deferred Revenue | 100 | 93 |
| Refundable Advances | 80 | 45 |
| Accrued Postretirement Benefit Liability | 64 | 64 |
| Total Liabilities | \$571 | \$568 |
| Net Assets | | |
| Without Donor Restrictions | 20,099 | 15,663 |
| With Donor Restrictions: | | |
| Purpose Restrictions | 6,866 | 6,370 |
| Perpetual In Nature | 14,672 | 13,912 |
| Total With Donor Restrictions | 21,538 | 20,282 |
| Total Net Assets | 41,637 | 35,945 |
| Total Liabilities And Net Assets | \$42,208 | \$36,513 |

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

June 30, 2025, With Summarized Comparative Information for 2024

Amounts Expressed In Thousands

| | | | 2025 | 2024 |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS | WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS | TOTAL | TOTAL |
| REVENUE AND SUPPORT | | | | |
| Legacy And Bequest | \$3,683 | \$747 | \$4,430 | \$5,895 |
| Contributions | 2,266 | 833 | 3,099 | 1,845 |
| Contributed Media Time | 964 | - | 964 | 1,796 |
| Program Service Revenue | 282 | - | 282 | 148 |
| Special Event: | | | | |
| Special Event: Revenue | 204 | - | 204 | 120 |
| Less: Direct Donor Benefit Cost | (72) | - | (72) | (49) |
| Special Event Revenue, Net | 132 | - | 132 | 71 |
| Royalty Income | 33 | - | 33 | 48 |
| Other Income | 23 | - | 23 | 42 |
| Investment Earnings, Net | 1,702 | 2,018 | 3,720 | 5,154 |
| Net Assets Released From Restrictions: | | | | |
| Satisfaction of Purpose Restrictions | 2,342 | (2,342) | - | - |
| Total Revenue And Support | 11,427 | 1,256 | 12,683 | 14,999 |
| EXPENSES | | | | |
| Program Services | 5,170 | - | 5,170 | 5,534 |
| Supporting Services: | | | | |
| Management and General | 1,037 | - | 1,037 | 1,279 |
| Fundraising | 784 | - | 784 | 707 |
| Total Supporting Services | 1,821 | - | 1,821 | 1,986 |
| Total Expenses | 6,991 | - | 6,991 | 7,520 |
| Change In Net Assets | 4,436 | 1,256 | 5,692 | 7,479 |
| NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR | 15,663 | 20,282 | 35,945 | 28,466 |
| NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR | \$20,099 | \$21,538 | \$41,637 | \$35,945 |

AFB OFFICES

AFB HEADQUARTERS

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Arlington, VA 22206

AFB BUSINESS & FINANCE OFFICE

American Foundation for the Blind
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