FY2026

ANNUAL REPORT

Cultivating Independence and Opportunity



AFB American Foundation for the Blind®

www.afb.org

INTRODUCTION

This annual report spotlights AFB's key accomplishments throughout the year, along with an overview of the organization's financial health. These accomplishments are made possible through 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.

OPEN LETTER

From AFB President and CEO Eric Bridges and AFB Chair Sarah Herrlinger



Sarah Herrlinger with Eric Bridges

The following annual report from the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) covers the 2026 fiscal year, beginning on July 1, 2025, and concluding on June 30, 2026. As you read through the key achievements and review AFB's financial standing, we hope you will share our excitement in reflecting on a historic FY2026.

Reflecting on the successes achieved by AFB this past year, one dominant theme comes to mind: that prosperity and opportunity come not at the labor of idle hands, but through patient and determined tending to seeds planted in the past. This idea is rooted in our nation's founding, as Ben Franklin so eloquently wrote in his 1758 essay On the Way to Wealth. Franklin writes, "He that by the plough would thrive, himself must either hold or drive."

The past fiscal year for AFB was a year of significant growth, rooted in thoughtful planning and patience as we continue to advance our strategic plan. Indeed, this past year yielded a great harvest through the work of our dedicated staff. Guided by the steady hand of our trustees and advisors, we introduced new programs, published groundbreaking research, and achieved global reach, driving forward a positive narrative on blindness. And, of course, none of this work would have been possible without the support of our partners and donors who nurtured the seeds planted through their own time, talents, and gifts.

Not only did AFB end our year in a financially sound position, but we were also able to step back and admire the fruits of our labor. For the first time in decades, AFB gathered our entire staff at the 2025 AFB Leadership Conference, joining attendees to hear a special message from colleagues who came before us, recorded on silver discs and preserved in the time capsule placed in the cornerstone of our former New York headquarters more than 90 years ago.

Hearing the words of our founders reminded us just how deeply rooted our organization is as one of the world's leading research and advocacy institutions creating opportunity and expanding inclusion for the millions of people across our country who are blind or have low vision. And it framed our future more clearly as we continue to make progress on our strategic plan.

Marking the major milestones of FY2026, the AFB Public Policy and Research Institute expanded its research into better understanding the transformative impact of AI during these historic times. We also launched our first cohort of the AFB Scholars Program, providing life-changing scholarships while also mentoring the next generation of leaders in their respective fields. We wrapped up the year with an incredible celebration of Helen Keller's legacy at the world premiere party for our award-winning documentary film *Possibilities*. These milestones, coupled with our continued work to create a high-performing workplace, demonstrate that when planning and performance come together, opportunity blossoms in ways that significantly improve our chances for success.

This is what has allowed AFB for more than a century to continue its work creating a world of endless possibilities for people who are blind or have low vision. There is no question that challenges and misconceptions around blindness still stand on the horizon. But as long as we plow the field in ways that ensure our seedlings can take root, we know our prosperity will stand strong.

Sincerely,

ERIC BRIDGES
President & CEO

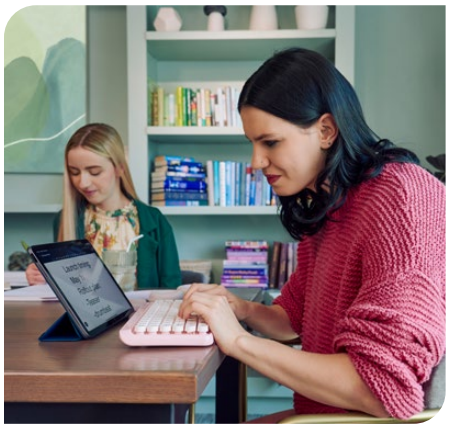
SARAH HERRLINGER
Chair, Board of Trustees



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

AFB's PPRI Leads the Way on Leveraging AI

For over a century, the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) has served as the premier research institution examining the critical issues impacting people who are blind or have low vision. In addition to publishing the *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness (JVIB)*, AFB has cultivated valuable research through its Public Policy and Research Institute (PPRI) that drives change, providing guidance to policymakers, industry, and thought leaders with impactful recommendations that expand opportunity and inclusion for people who are blind or have low vision.



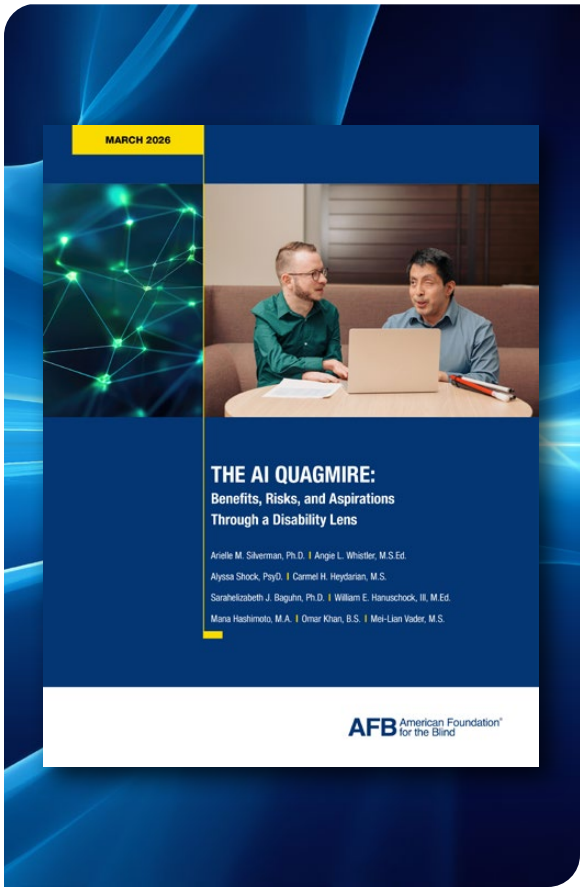
During FY26, PPRI continued its cross-disability inquiry into the impact of artificial intelligence. Following the success of its groundbreaking report the prior year, PPRI broadened its reach in FY26 by conducting a national survey of over 1,700 people. What made this study unique was that it included both disabled and non-disabled individuals. This offered an in-depth examination of attitudes about, and experiences using, AI, focusing on similarities and differences between disabled and nondisabled Americans.

"As we cast a wider net with this second phase of our research on AI, it allowed us to identify areas of similarity between disabled and non-disabled people while at the same time recognizing what is unique or offers greater impact for people with disabilities. While our data did reveal common threads across all populations, such as concerns over privacy, there were definitely some clear trends that emerged amongst those with disabilities, particularly for people with sensory disabilities like those who are blind or have low vision."

— DR. ARIELLE SILVERMAN, AFB DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH

The findings revealed a wealth of information around attitudes and experiences with AI. Key topics addressed included education, employment, transportation, healthcare, and privacy. The report also explored the benefits of AI as assistive technology, as well as its potential risks, such as the effects of AI hallucinations when reading text or captioning speech. These focus areas allowed for guidance and recommendations that can assist developers, thought leaders, and policymakers.

> "It is our hope that by addressing both the challenges and opportunities AI presents, we can leverage it to truly empower the more than one billion people living around the world today with a disability. Just imagine what such a world could be like, where we could all live independently and be fully included in society, so long as AI is built equitably where all can harness its power."
>
> **— STEPHANIE ENYART, AFB CHIEF PUBLIC POLICY & RESEARCH OFFICER**



The report highlighted a central tension: AI is both a powerful accessibility tool and a source of emerging inequity. Participants reported widespread adoption of AI, meaningful benefits in communication and productivity, and strong interest in further skill development. Yet they also described persistent accessibility barriers, challenges disabled people faced as they embraced using AI in high-stakes contexts, and a clear preference for human interaction when privacy is at stake.

The findings were published in five reports, beginning with the March 2026 release of *The AI Quagmire: Benefits, Risks, and Aspirations Through a Disability Lens*, followed by four topical reports with additional findings. Access the full series, along with PPRI's 2025 AI white paper and principles for disability-inclusive AI, at afb.org/AIResearch.



PPRI Team Members at the 2026 ATIA Conference

PPRI On the Move

Following the success of its initial body of research on artificial intelligence, published in January 2025, AFB's Public Policy and Research Institute (PPRI) hit the road in FY26, traveling to conferences inside the blindness field and far beyond it. PPRI shared AI research at a mainstream AI industry conference, presented to multiple Silicon Valley developers, and fostered new academic relationships by presenting at multiple universities. PPRI made great strides in sharing the knowledge gained through its first round of AI research.

PPRI Promotes Best Practices for Older Adults



Dr. Pris Rogers and Angie Whistler from the PPRI Team

In August 2025, AFB hosted an in-person workshop at Marshall University for community leaders working with older adults, providing valuable guidance on best practices for aging in place and living independently.

Leading the workshop was AFB's senior advisor for aging and vision loss, Dr. Pris Rogers, who was joined by Dr. Arielle Silverman, AFB's director of research. Together, they provided best practices that meet the unique needs of West Virginia's aging population.

West Virginia currently has the highest prevalence of vision loss in the country, and in such a rural state, maintaining independence may seem out of reach. However, the workshop broke down misconceptions and provided valuable tips that can be used in the home and the community to make sure that as a person grows older, changes in their sight will not be a life sentence of seclusion.

The workshop helped set the stage for later research in FY26 focusing specifically on the needs of older adults, which will be published in FY27.

INVESTING IN OPPORTUNITY

New AFB Scholars Program Plants Seeds for Future Success

The 2025-2026 school year marked the inaugural year of the AFB Scholars Program, which provides substantial scholarships for students who are blind in the United States.

In the first year of the program, AFB selected four outstanding students, each demonstrating strong academic achievement, leadership potential, and commitment to creating a more inclusive world. The inaugural scholars are:

- **Annika Ariel** — From Santa Rosa, California, Ariel entered her second year of law school at Stanford University.
- **Madeline Major** — From Plymouth, Minnesota, Major entered the University of Minnesota as a freshman, intending to study sociology and communications.
- **Maddie Nardone** — From Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Nardone is pursuing a doctorate in occupational therapy at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine.
- **Joshua Olukanni** — From Lawrenceville, Georgia, Olukanni is completing an M.S. in wealth management at Georgetown University.

> "Each of our scholars in this inaugural cohort has already established deep roots not just within their chosen course of study, but throughout the blindness community. As we welcome a new cohort in the coming year, we know that our new scholars enter on solid ground."
>
> **— ERIC BRIDGES, AFB PRESIDENT AND CEO**

The AFB Scholars Program is available to graduate and undergraduate students who meet the qualifications for legal blindness. Awards are available up to $20,000 for undergraduate students, $28,000 for graduate students, and $8,000 for community college students. These scholarships are in addition to those AFB awards in partnership with the American Council of the Blind (ACB).

> "What we've learned from this initial cohort is that each of our scholars has the potential to make an enormous impact within our community. Moving forward, AFB will begin to target specific disciplines to further increase the impact these scholars can have within their chosen fields."
>
> **— BETHANY JOHNSON, AFB VICE PRESIDENT OF PROGRAMS**

Participants in the program receive career coaching and mentorship from successful blind professionals. AFB also covers expenses for scholars to attend a relevant conference, where they are joined by a member of AFB's leadership team to support networking and help build professional connections.

The AFB Scholars Program is part of the organization's broader mission to champion inclusion and access for people who are blind or have low vision. By investing in educational opportunities, AFB continues to break down misconceptions about blindness and support the next generation of leaders within the disability community.

A LASTING LEGACY

Made possible through the generous support of the Alonso Scholarship Fund, the AFB Scholars Program aims to invest in today's scholars to transform tomorrow's world. For more information, visit afb.org/scholarships.







Introducing Bethany Johnson, AFB Vice President for Programs

In November 2025, the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) welcomed Bethany Johnson as its new vice president for programs.

Johnson joined AFB from the Overbrook School for the Blind in Philadelphia, bringing more than 25 years of experience leading innovative programs that promote workforce solutions for people with disabilities.

As vice president for programs, Johnson serves on AFB's Senior Leadership Team, providing strategic direction and administrative oversight for a range of AFB initiatives and programs for students, including the AFB Leadership Conference, AFB Scholars Program, and Digital Accessibility Internship Program.

A FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS

The AFB Scholars Program is part of AFB's broader mission to champion inclusion and access for people who are blind or have low vision. By investing in educational opportunities, AFB continues to break down misconceptions about blindness and support the next generation of leaders in the disability community.

EXPANDING POSSIBILITIES

Global Release of AFB's *Possibilities* Kicks Off at Carnegie Hall



On June 27, 2026, Helen Keller's 146th birthday, the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) returned to a place where Keller's own voice once helped advance the cause of people who are blind: Carnegie Hall.

Before a packed audience at Zankel Hall, AFB presented the New York premiere of its award-winning documentary *Possibilities*, celebrating Keller's extraordinary legacy and a new generation of voices carrying her vision forward.

Possibilities moves beyond the familiar story of Keller's childhood to explore the remarkable life she led as an adult and the enduring impact of her decades of advocacy. Through the lived experiences of people who are blind or have low vision, the film examines what independence, opportunity, and belonging mean today and how Keller's determination continues to resonate in the 21st century.

For more than four decades, Keller worked closely with AFB, becoming one of the most prominent advocates of her day for people who are blind and deaf. She traveled extensively, including visits to more than 50 countries, advocating for education, employment, accessibility, and opportunity. *Possibilities* connects that historic work with the accomplishments and aspirations of people who are blind or have low vision today.



"We couldn't dream of a better place for the film's premiere. Keller spoke there during her lifetime and maintained a longstanding relationship with the Carnegie family, making the venue especially meaningful for this celebration of her contributions as one of our nation's leading icons for independence."

— TONY STEPHENS, AFB ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES PRODUCER







Moments from the *Possibilities* premiere at Carnegie Hall

The premiere also celebrated the inclusion of people with disabilities in filmmaking, both in front of and behind the camera. Following the screening, Stephens led a discussion with director Bill Sarine; audio description producer Roy Samuelson; audio description narrator Satauna Howery; and featured voices from the film, including author Leona Godan, advocate Krystel Allen, and award-winning musical artist Lachi. The panel discussed the filmmaking process and the importance of authentic representation in media.

Accessibility was central to the making of *Possibilities*. As the first feature-length film created with open audio description integrated into its storytelling, it enables blind and sighted audiences to experience the film together. Blind and low-vision professionals contributed throughout production, including creative direction, editing, music scoring, audio description, and storytelling.

The celebration at Carnegie Hall was also the beginning of a much larger journey. On the same day as the New York premiere, *Possibilities* received its global release on Apple TV, Amazon, and other major streaming platforms, reaching audiences in 63 countries.

"We're excited that our film is able to reshape conversations about disability representation. AFB is proud to share *Possibilities* with audiences everywhere and to continue advancing a future where authentic storytelling and accessibility are not an afterthought, but a catalyst for innovation, creativity, and a change in the perceptions of people who are blind."

— ERIC BRIDGES, AFB PRESIDENT AND CEO

The premiere was made possible through the generous support of the Dr. Robert and Elisa Migel Richards Fund. Elisa Migel Richards was the granddaughter of M.C. Migel, AFB's founder, who brought Helen Keller to work at AFB in 1924. To learn more about the film and where to stream *Possibilities*, visit afb.org/possibilities.



Alexandra Murphy, daughter of Elisa Migel Richards, joined other guests at the Carnegie Hall premiere.

KELLER'S LEGACY CONTINUES

Possibilities brings Helen Keller's legacy and the experiences of people who are blind or have low vision to audiences around the world, advancing conversations about independence, accessibility, and representation.

CONNECTING GENERATIONS

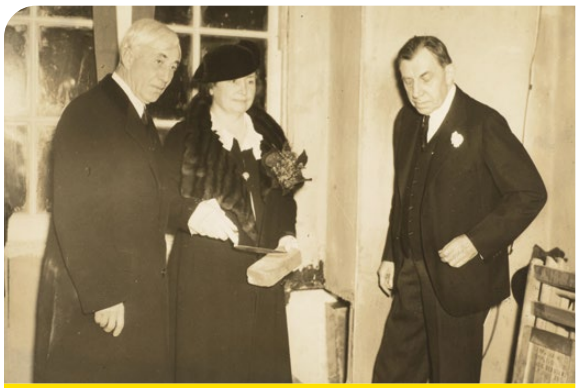
AFB Staff Finds Inspiration in Our Past



AFB staff gathered together at the 2025 AFB Leadership Conference.

In FY2026, AFB leadership set out to bring the entire staff together for the first time in many years. That gathering took place in November at the annual AFB Leadership Conference.

Held a few miles from AFB's new Arlington headquarters, the conference gave employees the opportunity to connect face-to-face, many for the first time. The gathering culminated on the final night, when staff and conference attendees came together for a special evening event to hear a message recorded by AFB employees more than 90 years ago.



M.C. Migel, Helen Keller and Dr. John Finley with the time capsule in 1934.

On December 5, 1934, AFB leadership and Helen Keller, who had joined AFB's staff a decade earlier, attended the cornerstone ceremony for the organization's newly constructed headquarters at 15 West 16th Street in Manhattan. During the ceremony, AFB founder M.C. Migel and Keller placed a time capsule in the building's cornerstone. Among its contents were two silver discs produced by the same AFB staff who had pioneered the creation of the first talking book two years earlier.

The first disc contained a recording of the cornerstone ceremony and a report on AFB's achievements during its first decade. The second held a special recording of several staff members speaking to those who would come after them. In what might be described as an early podcast, they sat around a table, discussed the events of their day, and imagined what the future might hold.

Nearly 91 years later, staff and conference attendees gathered to hear those reflections and dreams at a special evening event titled "Bedtime Stories with Milk and Cookies."

> "It was a profound experience. As a remote workforce, it was the first time many of our staff had been in the same room with their fellow employees; and to be gathered under one roof listening to forebears who were critical in launching AFB and leading the blindness movement in America so many years ago… The whole experience inspired us all to carry forth the torch and meaningfully influence the next 100 years of AFB's work.
>
> **— SONYA SHIFLET, AFB CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER**



AFB's team of guide dogs also joined the festivities, modeling their pajamas in a fashion show before the bedtime stories. Along with the milk and cookies offered to guests, AFB's Autumn Bice brought homemade dog treats, making sure nobody went to bed hungry that evening.

The conference demonstrated the power that radiates when we gather together in person. As AFB continues to foster a high-performing workforce, leadership recognizes the importance of helping employees feel connected to one another and to the organization's history. The AFB Leadership Conference offered the perfect stage to bring these two worlds together, with the hope that staff will have more opportunities to gather in the years ahead.

AFB LEADERSHIP & STAFF

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 Officer

Bethany Johnson
Vice President, Programs

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
Aubrey Green
Syed Hassan
Alexis Hubbard
Breanna Kerr
Haley Linville
Sarah Malaier
Timothy Meadows
Maria Mercado
Aaron Preece
Kristin Reuschel
Priscilla Rogers
Arielle Silverman
Stacy Sporie
Eric Ulbrich
Angela Whistler
Jenna Woodall
Andrew Worley
Diane Wright

As of June 30, 2026

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Macy Lamb
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Victoria Watts
Founder and CEO, CyR.U.S.

Thomas Wlodkowski
Vice President, Accessibility, Comcast

As of June 30, 2025

American Foundation for the Blind, Inc., and Subsidiary and AFB Special Fund, Inc.

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

June 30, 2026, With Summarized Comparative Information for 2025

Amounts Expressed In Thousands

ASSETS	2026	2025
Cash and Cash Equivalents	**$976**	$2,343
Accounts Receivable, Net	**94**	79
Contributions Receivable, Net	**416**	95
Interest and Dividend Receivable	**75**	62
Investments	**43,348**	39,395
Prepaid Expenses and Other Assets	**115**	218
Property and Equipment, Net	**91**	16
Right-of-Use Asset, Operating Lease, Net	**41**	-
Total Assets	**$45,156**	$42,208
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Liabilities		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	**$429**	$327
Deferred Revenue	**13**	55
Refundable Advances	**91**	80
Lease liability - Operating Lease	**41**	-
Split Interest Liability	**46**	45
Accrued Postretirement Benefit Liability	**58**	64
Total Liabilities	**$678**	$571
Net Assets		
Without Donor Restrictions	**21,705**	20,099
With Donor Restrictions:		
Purpose Restrictions	**7,178**	6,866
Perpetual In Nature	**15,595**	14,672
Total With Donor Restrictions	**22,773**	21,538
Total Net Assets	**44,478**	41,637
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	**$45,156**	$42,208

American Foundation for the Blind, Inc., and Subsidiary and AFB Special Fund, Inc.

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Year Ended June 30, 2026, With Summarized Comparative Information for 2025

Amounts Expressed In Thousands

			2026	2025
	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	**TOTAL**	TOTAL
REVENUE AND SUPPORT				
Legacy And Bequest	$1,989	$194	**$2,183**	$4,430
Contributions	878	1,045	**1,923**	3,099
Contributed Media Time	234	-	**234**	964
Program Service Revenue	293	-	**293**	282
Special Event:				
Special Event: Revenue	201	-	**201**	204
Less: Direct Donor Benefit Cost	(53)	-	**(53)**	(72)
Special Event, Net	148	-	**148**	132
Royalty Income	28	-	**28**	33
Other Income	6	-	**6**	23
Investment Earnings, Net	2,641	2,393	**5,034**	3,720
Net Assets Released From Restrictions:				
Satisfaction of Purpose Restrictions	2,397	(2,397)	**-**	-
Total Revenue And Support	8,614	1,235	**9,849**	12,683
EXPENSES				
Program Services	5,095	-	**5,095**	5,170
Supporting Services:				
Management and General	1,281	-	**1,281**	1,037
Fundraising	632	-	**632**	784
Total Supporting Services	1,913	-	**1,913**	1,821
Total Expenses	7,008	-	**7,008**	6,991
Change In Net Assets	1,606	1,235	**2,814**	5,692
NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR	20,099	21,538	**41,637**	35,945
NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR	$21,705	$22,773	**$44,478**	$41,637

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