NEWVIEW SPOTLIGHT: HANNAH SMITH

Hannah Smith’s story is all about beating the odds. Less than two years ago, she was a normal college student. Attending University of Central Oklahoma with plans to become a nurse, Hannah was living a busy and fast-paced life full of friends, family, and her fiancé. Hannah says she was “always on the go.”

In the fall of 2019, Hannah was diagnosed with Stage 4 lymphoma. A little over a year later, in December of 2020, Hannah was staying the night at her mom’s house. She felt compelled to have a sleepover there, a gut feeling that she followed. In the middle of the night, Hannah woke up to use the restroom. When she awoke, she found herself in the dark. Literally overnight, Hannah had gone completely blind.

Hannah took the initiative to begin the MOVE program at NewView just six months after losing her vision. In less than a year, Hannah has learned and adapted to being totally blind very rapidly. She navigates her home without a cane, cooks, checks the mail, and even puts on mascara. Hannah’s journey has not been an easy one and she’s very adamant that she would not be where she is without her support system, a large part of which is the community she has found at NewView. Our staff and other MOVE students have been a sounding board, a source of education, empowerment, encouragement, and a place where she could look to for regaining her independence.

Hannah also volunteers part-time at NewView, helping provide social support for other MOVE students as they learn their way around a new world. Hannah is also a guest star on NewView’s social media where she will be doing a Q&A segment called #HangingWithHannah, where there are no wrong questions! Hannah will be answering questions and showing the world how she cooks, checks the mail, navigates college, goes to the nail salon, and how she uses a stair stepper and treadmill.

Hannah is now attending East Central University online to pursue a bachelor’s degree in social work. Returning to college is an overwhelming accomplishment, and it’s even more amazing that she never skipped a beat. She truly hit the ground running when she went blind and has worked incredibly hard to continue being proactive in life. Hannah is a force to be reckoned with.

If you have a question for Hannah, submit it to us on social media! #HangingWithHannah
NEWVIEW ANNOUNCES BASE SUPPLY CENTER OPENING

NewView is very excited to announce the opening of our Base Supply Center at Vance Air Force Base in Enid, OK! The ribbon cutting was Monday, July 12. We are so excited to finally launch this store, but we couldn’t have done it alone. We will sell a variety of SKILCRAFT and AbilityOne products online and in-person to Air Force personnel and service contractors. This opportunity is an incredible way for us to continue our mission of providing meaningful opportunities to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

UPCOMING EVENTS TBD

All VITAL and Eyes Just Talking events have been canceled through December due to COVID. Please visit nvoklahoma.org/event-calendar for up to date information on all upcoming events.

GOVERNOR STITT ISSUES WHITE CANE SAFETY AWARENESS DAY PROCLAMATION

Join us in celebrating White Cane Safety Awareness Day on October 15th. In 1964, Congress designated October 15th of each year as White Cane Safety Day. This is the first time that it was widely recognized that people who are blind or low vision could travel safely and independently.

Local events include a walk hosted by the Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, a division of Department of Rehabilitation Services. Hosted in Tulsa and Oklahoma City, gatherings will be from 11 am to 12 pm, both followed by a walk.

The Tulsa event will be at OSU-Tulsa campus, and the Oklahoma City event will be at the Ronald J. Norick Downtown Library. For more information on these events, visit oklahoma.gov

GIFTS IN ACTION

DONOR SPOTLIGHT:
The NewView fundraising team is shining a spotlight of gratitude on The Gibney Family Foundation. NewView was recently awarded a $30,000 grant from the foundation to help expand efforts in the MOVE Program. MOVE is NewView’s pre-vocational training program and stands for More Opportunities through Vocational Evaluation. This urgently needed funding will be used to help purchase new equipment for the program and will also increase resources for the Assistive Technology Instructors (ATI). Thank you, Gibney Family Foundation!

DONOR HIGHLIGHTS:
NewView expresses humble thanks for gifts received recently from: American Fidelity Foundation, Areawide Aging Agency, Cox Charities, The Oklahoma City Indian Clinic, Osage Casino Hotel, Paycom, Gus and Emily Pekara, and Schnake Turnbo Frank.

IN CELEBRATION:
NewView celebrates the statewide co-chairs for the 2021 Focusing-on-the-Future Campaign. These community leaders are helping raise community awareness and funds for NewView programs and services. OKC-Region: Robyn Sunday-Allen and Russ Florence. Tulsa-Region: Jackie Price Johannsen and Whitney Stauffer. Thank you for your efforts on behalf of the NewView mission!

Lauren Branch, PRESIDENT AND CEO
NVOKlahoma.org
VETERANS CORNER

NewView is proud to host an annual Veteran’s Day event to celebrate our heroes. Last year, amid the pandemic, we had to get creative and rather than having Oklahoma City veterans come to us, we came to them! With the help of Boeing and a group of wonderful volunteers, we were able to deliver meals and a small gift to veterans across the city.

This year, we are collaborating with Boeing once again to plan something creative and safe for our veterans. Details of this year’s Veteran’s Event are still in the works, so keep an eye out for more information as it gets closer.

2021 FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN: FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE

The coronavirus pandemic changed many aspects of our lives, and many of these changes will be permanent. It created a heightened awareness of contagions and emphasis on hygiene in public, it ushered in rapid changes in business models and work-from-home employment, but most of all created a new reliance on technologies that are now needed to keep us connected with friends, family, coworkers, and even vital services such as medical services and home delivery of grocery items and consumer goods. These rapid adaptive changes ushered in a “new normal” that we now live every day, and NewView Oklahoma is working to ensure that Oklahomans experiencing blindness or low vision are not left behind.

2020 was an unprecedented and difficult year. COVID was isolating, especially for people with visual impairments. NewView is focused on coming back better than ever through our impact on people of all ages. Vision loss doesn’t look the same for any two patients, so we focus on taking an individualized approach to each patient’s vision needs.

For Rachael Chaney, who is losing her vision due to macular degeneration, that meant providing her with magnifying devices so she could still read her mail, books, and newspaper. For 21-year-old Hannah Smith, who became totally blind overnight in December 2020, it means teaching her to navigate the world around her so she can go back to college, pursue her career, and live independently and proactively.

Please take the time to watch our Focusing on the Future campaign video to learn more about Rachael and Hannah’s stories. We rely on your donations to continue providing life changing services to patients like them.
Year after year, NewView teaches young adults with low vision to water ski at O.W.L. Camp. O.W.L. Camp, or Oklahomans Without Limits, is one of NewView’s summer camps. It is a much more relaxed camp than Keys to Work, it’s likely exactly what you think of when you hear “summer camp.”

For kids who are blind or low vision, it’s easy for their adolescence to be focused on what they can’t do. They begin to differ more from their peers. They don’t get their driver’s license or a car at 16. Some sports are not safe for them to participate in. But at OWL Camp, nothing is off limits. Not even water skiing. NewView’s COTAs and volunteers help even some of the most reserved campers feel empowered to try something like water skiing, which previously seemed completely out of reach. This suddenly makes much more of life seem so much more accessible to them.

After spending a day at O.W.L Camp, you’d never know these kids had any kind of disability. Colton is a stellar pool player. Trinity is always down for a game of UNO. River is a fishing machine. Ben is quite the comedian, constantly bantering and cracking jokes about his lack of visual acuity. Chloe is hilarious and always the first to try new things, including driving the boat assisted by Dr. Riley!

Every one of these kids are inspiring, courageous, unique, and so many more wonderful things. Despite all that we hope they take away from our summer camp programs, it is truly NewView’s privilege to work with them to give them a sense of community and help them feel empowered and capable as they grow into adulthood.

Every year, our summer camps fill up fast. We are already accepting applications for our 2022 summer programs. For more information, visit our website or email ahamen@newviewoklahoma.org.
NewView is Celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month! This year’s theme is America’s Recovery: Powered by Inclusion. It reflects the importance of ensuring that people with disabilities have full access to employment and community involvement during the national recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. NewView has continually been at the front of the initiative to provide meaningful employment and community support to Oklahomans who are blind or low vision for over 75 years. This year, we are excited to announce a new division of NewView, in which we will be employing Oklahomans with disabilities to help local and national organizations provide fully accessible online experiences to everyone in line with accessibility laws and regulations. Digital accessibility is a growing priority, especially as many organizations adopt increased digital presences due to COVID-19. From job and loan applications to ordering food or groceries online, accessibility isn’t a luxury, it’s a necessity.

**58%**

According to the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), a service from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy, 58% of accommodations cost absolutely nothing to make while the rest typically cost only $500.

**65%**

**EXPERIENCE**

More than 65% of respondents have worked more than 10 years with their current level of vision.

**41%**

According to a global Employment Survey by the World Blind Union, the overall B/LV unemployment rate is 41%.

**61%**

**EDUCATION**

61% of US respondents reported having an undergraduate degree or postgraduate degree.

**70%**

of US respondents are interested in finding a new job.