



# VIEWpointe

## President's Message

**F**iscal cliff. Debt ceiling. Sequestration. These are terms that Americans have become increasingly familiar with as our government tries to get its fiscal house in order while trying to avoid another recession.



Reinhard Mabry

Significant cuts in spending are being considered to reduce the annual deficit and stop adding to our national debt. Some of the spending cuts being debated in Congress would have a direct impact on people with disabilities, including those citizens living with vision loss. We've seen this before.

Last year, the Missouri legislature considered a spending cut which would have effectively eliminated health care benefits for 2,800 Missourians who are blind. Fortunately, Missouri legislators found a way to keep the benefits for now. But, this likely won't be the last time such cuts are considered. Across the country, government at all levels is faced with a dilemma: Cut benefits for those clearly in need or add to a mounting tax burden.

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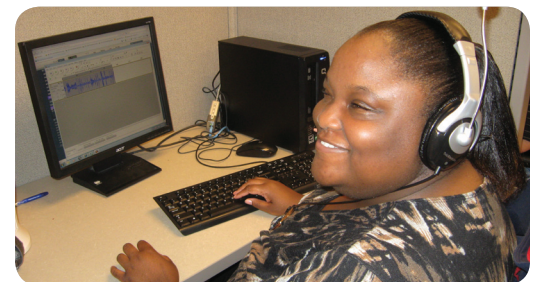
## New Business Growth and Record Workforce Numbers Kick Off 2013

**T**hrough new partnerships and acquisitions, Alphapointe is proud to announce that the agency employs the largest workforce of people with vision loss in its 102-year history. As of Dec. 1, 2012, a total of 118 people with vision loss are employed at Alphapointe. One of the factors contributing to this record number of employees is the conversion of jobs formerly held by sighted people to jobs accessible for people with little or no vision. Says Reinhard Mabry, president and CEO, "Alphapointe staff have been working closely with rehabilitation engineers to assess a variety of manufacturing processes to determine how those jobs could be converted. The resulting changes have made it possible for our agency to employ new people with vision loss."

In addition to converting existing jobs, Alphapointe has also actively pursued new business opportunities. In December, the agency acquired two new business operations, Matchless Molding, LLC and Proformance Calling, LLC. Matchless Molding, formerly operated in Nashville, Tenn., specializes in the production of micro molded plastic components and parts for small electronics, machinery and other automated equipment.

The former Proformance Calling, now known as Alphapointe Contact Services, is based in Warrensburg, Mo., and specializes in contact services for commercial and institutional clients. The new Alphapointe Contact Services currently specializes in connecting prospective college students and their parents with colleges. However, according to Jerry Maloney, director of Contact Center Services, the possibilities for new commercial business outside of the academic field are really limitless. "Alphapointe Contact Services has both the

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New business growth leads to new jobs, including call centers.



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## Dining in the Dark 2012

# The Event You Have to Not See to Believe

**O**n Oct. 23 Alphapointe once again welcomed a sellout crowd of 250 people to experience Dining in the Dark, a three-course, gourmet meal in complete darkness served by waiters who are visually impaired. This was the fourth year that presenting sponsor United Healthcare partnered with Alphapointe to bring this incredible dining experience to Kansas City diners at the Westin Hotel. Through the generosity of United Healthcare, honorary chair Dr. Joseph Tauber and Tauber Eye Center and numerous other sponsors, this event raised more than \$70,000 for the rehabilitation and education programs at Alphapointe, including the college PREP and STEP programs and the summer camp programs for youth. ●



Michael Margherio, United Healthcare



Bryan Alkire, a law student at Washburn University, received a scholarship at the recent Dining in the Dark.



Dr. Joseph and Mrs. Judy Tauber

## President's Message

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For our most vulnerable citizens, the decision to cut meager benefits seems unfair, especially considering that nearly three out of four citizens who are blind are unable to find competitive employment.

At Alphapointe, we believe there is a solution: Jobs. For more than 100 years, we have proven that people who are blind are productive, highly successful employees when given the right opportunity, training and support. They are loyal, dependable and hardworking. Alphapointe has worked to create new partnerships with businesses in the private sector. We thank companies such as 3M, Sealed Air, Kensington, Sanofi-Aventis and Boulevard Brewing who have recognized the value in working

with us to create aspirational careers for people who are blind, or have hired those we have trained.

The federal government recognizes the value of employing this untapped workforce and offers incentives to employers who hire



people with disabilities. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the federal AbilityOne program which employs more than 50,000 Americans with disabilities. The Missouri legislature is considering incentives

similar to the federal program which would create new job opportunities for people with disabilities in the state.

With these new incentives, employers would be encouraged to invest in this underutilized workforce. We are hopeful that this law is passed. But, whether it is passed or not, businesses throughout the state should commit to harnessing the talent of the 20,000 people who are blind in our state who are capable and worthy of working but who are unemployed. We've proven it can be done and with your help, we can make a difference.

Truly,

## Alphapointe Volunteer and Artist Tina Blatter Receives Grant to Pursue New Opportunities

Tina Blatter, an artist and volunteer with the Alpha Arts Program, was awarded a grant at a recent micro-funding luncheon. Tina has almost no vision due to both eye disease and injury, and works in both textiles and watercolors in addition to being a published author of a book about her journey to becoming an artist with vision loss. She gives her time each month instructing other artists who are blind and who desire to learn new techniques through the Alpha Arts Program at Alphapointe.

Tina was recently given the opportunity to present her case for funding alongside two other artists at a luncheon sponsored by The Centurions Leadership Program. At the conclusion, each attendee voted on the project to fund by putting a button in the jar of the artist of their choosing. Tina's project was the overwhelming winner; she was awarded nearly \$500 to further her creative pursuits.

Tina plans to use the funding to expand her work to galleries in Weston, Parkville and other towns outside of the Kansas City metro area. "Transportation to these areas can be a challenge, as buses and the shared taxi service I utilize do not travel there," says Blatter.

The Alpha Arts program for which Tina volunteers is open to anyone in the community with vision loss and meets every second and fourth Saturday morning at Alphapointe's campus. For more information about Tina or the Alpha Arts program, please contact Clay Berry, director of education and rehabilitation, (816) 237-2048. ●



Tina Blatter

## New Business Growth and Record Workforce Numbers Kick Off 2013

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capacity and the expertise to provide services from market research to new customer prospecting." This new acquisition increases Alphapointe's presence outside of the Kansas City metro area, and will create white-collar employment opportunities for people with vision loss.

This year of unprecedented growth has been the result of a renewed and focused effort to provide more opportunities for employment and independence for people with vision loss. The unemployment rate for this population is still nearly 70 percent. Alphapointe is committed to drastically reducing that figure over the next 20 years through strategic growth, partnerships and new innovation. For more information about the exciting changes happening at Alphapointe, please go to our website at [www.alphapointe.org](http://www.alphapointe.org). ●

## Alphapointe Summer Camp Is Back!

It might be chilly outside, but Alphapointe is already hard at work planning the third year of summer camp programming for kids and teens with vision loss.

"We are excited to announce that both Adventure and Technology Camps are back, and will be better than ever," says Clay Berry, director of education and rehabilitation at Alphapointe. "Both camps are a great opportunity for kids and teens with vision loss to experience a fun summer camp, learn new skills and make new friends."

Adventure Camp, for kids with vision loss ages 8-14, will be held July 8-12 at Heartland Camp in Parkville, Mo. Technology Camp, for teens ages 12-18, will be held July 22-26 at Alphapointe's Life Skills Campus.

Last year, nearly 50 kids attended one or both of the Alphapointe camps. Hiking, swimming, arts and crafts



and archery were just a few of the activities that the Adventure Campers enjoyed, and the Tech Campers became iPad pros after just a week. Both camps are open to any child with vision impairment, but space is limited.

If you are the parent of a child with vision loss, know someone that might benefit

from either Adventure or Tech Camp, or are interested in volunteering for camp, please contact Alphapointe today at (816) 421-5848. ●



# VIEWpointe

is a publication of Alphapointe.

IMPROVING LIFE FOR  
THOSE WHO LOSE SIGHT.

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## Pointes of Interest

- Congratulations to Larry Simms and Chris Montavon, the Direct Labor and Indirect Labor Employees of the Year. Both Chris and Larry have shown passion and dedication to their jobs in manufacturing and quality control at Alphapointe, and were presented with awards at the Alphapointe Holiday Party. Chris and Larry now have the opportunity to represent Alphapointe at the National Industries for the Blind Conference in October.
- The Alphapointe Adventure Campers didn't wait for warmer weather to get together. On Dec. 14 several returning campers and many new faces came together for a fun filled trip to the Kansas City Zoo. The kids had the opportunity to touch several animals, including a Brazilian Rainbow Boa, and spent the afternoon making new friends. Adventure and Technology Camp will once again kick off this July. Please contact Shelley Baker at sbaker@alphapointe.org to register your child!
- If you have driven past Alphapointe in the last month, you might have noticed some fantastic changes at the Life Skills Campus. All new directional and informational signs were recently installed as part of Alphapointe's new branding campaign.



Adventure Camper Raef discovers a boa constrictor at the Kansas City Zoo.



Larry Simms, Direct Labor Employee of the Year



Chris Montavon, Indirect Labor Employee of the Year