



Grant Award & Grand Opening of the Lions DENN!



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Charlotte, NC – December 12, 2024- Lions Services a Charlotte based nonprofit 501(c)(3) serving the blind and visually impaired community is excited to announce the Agency has been awarded a Digital Champion Grant in the amount of \$367,373.05 to be used over the course of two and half years to fund the Lions DENN (Digital Equity Navigation Network)! As a grantee, Lions Services will partner with the N.C. Department of Technology's Office of Digital Equity and Literacy to help people from target populations identified in the Digital Equity Grant Act.

The Lions DENN (Digital Equity Navigation Network) – is the city's first Assistive Technology Center of Excellence for individuals with vision loss. The Lions DENN is a unique training center focusing on improving digital equity for those with vision loss and who otherwise have difficulty with access to technology. The Digital Champion grants are part of Governor Cooper's plan to close the digital divide by expanding access to high-speed internet and addressing issues of affordability and digital literacy.

Benefit to employees and the community.




Lions Services employees will benefit from a comprehensive technology assessment including getting connected to broadband if needed, training in digital literacy skills and assistive technology, and access to hardware /software for the continued learning, independent living and economic mobility. The model will use assistive technology subject matter experts, Lions Services employees through the Technology Ambassador Program, and community partnerships. The Center for Digital Equity, a local initiative focused on "Making Mecklenburg County the most digitally equitable community in America" will be a partner in this venture as well as E2D.

Lions Services has hired the FIRST Assistive Technology Specialist Erin Chavez. Ms. Chavez was diagnosed with Retinoblastoma at just three months old and lost her sight before her second birthday. Ms. Chavez received her Master's degree in Rehab Counseling from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock in 2012, she has served as a Certified Rehabilitation Vocational Counselor in Washington State and Texas working with clients with different disabilities including people who are blind and visually impaired. She also worked with Vocational Rehabilitation in North Carolina working with clients with different types of brain injuries.

By 2025, the Lions DENN will serve the broader community offering one-on-one trainings for community members, education for community partners, special projects, and extended services for corporate and government partners.

"This Digital Champion grant project was funded by the N.C. Department of Information Technology's Office of Digital Equity and Literacy." Lions Services is proud to partner with organizations like the Center for Digital Equity, Clym, E2D and many others to bring it to life.

Contact Us

-  704-921-1527
-  danad@lionservices.org
-  www.lionservices.org

Lions Services Inc.

4600 N Tryon St, Charlotte, NC 28213

GRAND OPENING CELEBRATION: December 11, 2024, Lions Services hosted the Grand Opening of the Lions DENN, welcoming over 50 guests who are integral to this special initiative and the celebration of digital inclusion within our community. Attendees had the opportunity to hear from the

Lions Services President and staff, tour the Lions DENN, and enjoy cake, champagne, and commemorative swag. We plan to begin offering tours for employees and the community starting in January 2025.

Stay tuned to this page for updates! For additional information, please contact: Dana Draa, Director of Outreach and Blind Services. **Email: danad@lionservices.org**

If you would like to support the Lions DENN through a donation, or to learn more please visit our website: **<https://lionservices.org/lions-denn>**



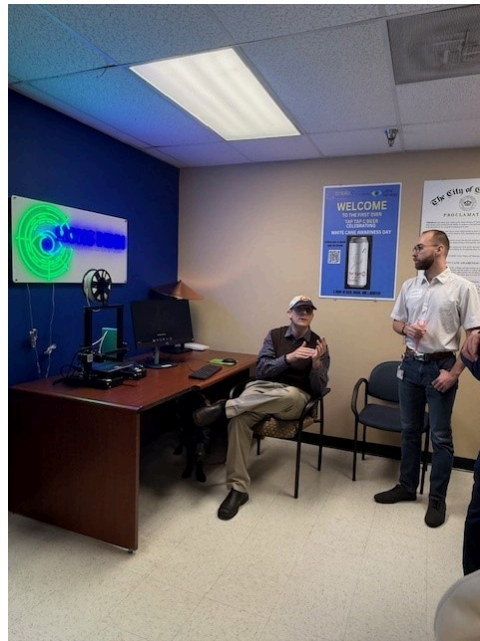
This Digital Champion grant project was **funded by the N.C. Department of Information Technology's Office of Digital Equity and Literacy**, and we are proud to partner with organizations like the Center for Digital Equity, Clym, E2D and many others to bring it to life.



The Donahue-Dudley Giving Fund

Pictured from left to right: Agatha Bisbikis-Development Director, *Lions Services* Phillip Holloway-Program Coordinator, *Office Of Digital Equity & Literacy*, Division of Broadband & Digital Equity N.C. Department of Information Technology, Dana Draa- Director of Outreach & Blind Services, *Lions Services*





LIONS DENN
DIGITAL EQUITY NAVIGATION NETWORK

We are unleashing unseen potential in people who are blind!

Your contributions help with:

- ✓ Skills Training
- ✓ Job Opportunities
- ✓ Access to Technology

Scan this code to donate or visit:
www.lionservices.org

Donations are accepted by mail at:
P.O. Box 561987 - Charlotte, NC 28256

