

The Wheaton Blind Outreach Center of *St. John Lutheran Church* offers the blind and visually impaired individuals in DuPage County a monthly opportunity to share a meal, a devotional message, and network with and support one another. The people come with varying degrees of sight, some just newly diagnosed with macular degeneration.

It is an active ministry at work that includes volunteers for meal preparation, serving, driving participants, and administrative assistance. Karen Crawford, the Center's Director says, *"The members are introduced to Scripture and enjoy the blessings which come from prayer fellowship with and for one another. It is our prayer that the Lord's Word would speak to them, and along with that Word and the loving efforts of our volunteers, our participants will see Christ and be led into relationship with Him."*

A short program is also provided which can range from a spokesperson involved with resources for the blind, to various authors who have written on topics of interest for the blind, or perhaps, they will "see" a movie that contains an added descriptive element designed for the blind. Entertainment has also been provided by various musical groups – from big band to small vocal ensembles.

Blind since birth, Karen has developed Wheaton Blind Outreach into a strong responsive program. Presently she spends approximately 20 hours per week in facilitating the group, and serving as a resource for others dealing with impaired vision.

A Braille Note Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) is needed to enhance the Director's efficiency. It provides people who are blind with a terrific piece of technology which can be taken anywhere, as it weighs approximately five pounds and is just 10 x 6 inches. The Braille Note offers portability while giving someone who is blind access to their information using either speech or refreshable Braille output or a combination of the two.

The Braille Note is great for organizing appointments, maintaining contact lists, reading electronic books, sending and receiving e-mail, doing word processing and many other tasks. It is menu driven so it is easy to operate. New, the Braille Note, sold by Human Ware, is priced at \$4,395 with an 18-cell display, or \$6,195 with a 32-cell display. Recognizing this is a huge request, but also keeping in mind the vastness of the LCC network, the Center would welcome a used Braille Note.

The thankfulness expressed, the laughter shared, and the encouragement given at the monthly meetings, all speak to the importance of Wheaton Blind Outreach. Newcomers and visitors are always welcome. To learn more of these services and the opportunities available to the visually impaired community in a non-threatening environment, please contact **Karen Crawford**, the Center's director, at **(630) 682-1834**.

[Click here to donate to The Wheaton Blind Outreach Center](#)

MISSION STATEMENT: The Wheaton Blind Outreach Center is a group of committed Christians dedicated to sharing God's love with the visually impaired community in a tangible way.