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Vision Rehabilitation Therapist Appreciation Week Commemorates Anne Sullivan

Vision Rehabilitation Therapist Appreciation Week will be observed this year the week of April 9-15, 2023 to commemorate Anne Sullivan’s birthday, on April 14, 1866. Anne Sullivan, a pioneer of the vision rehabilitation profession, was the teacher who worked closely with Helen Keller, to develop the skills Keller would later use as an international lecturer and advocate for individuals with vision and hearing loss.

Sullivan, a graduate of the Perkins School for the Blind, began working with 7 year old Helen, in 1887, as a Home Teacher, the original occupational title for the profession now called Vision Rehabilitation Therapist (VRT). Just as in sullivan’s career, today’s VRTs often travel to their client’s homes or workplaces for training.

Today’s VRT most often holds a Master’s level education, and additional national certification (CVRT) to meet established professional standards. For well over a century, as Home Teachers, Rehab Teachers, and now Vision Rehabilitation Therapists, VRTs provided the primary rehabilitation skills training for individuals experiencing blindness or vision loss. VRTs work with clients on:

• adapted daily living skills

• communication (including braille when needed)

• low vision devices

• using assistive technology (AT) such as computer and tablet screen readers or screen magnifiers

• adapted leisure activities and sports

Most often, clients are adults who have experienced an acquired vision loss through diseases such as macular degeneration, glaucoma, diabetes, etc. Referrals may come from doctors, or clients may refer themselves through local state or nonprofit agencies. Often VRT services are provided at no out-of-pocket cost. To find a VRT near you try VisionAware’s Directory of Services <https://visionaware.org/directory> or call the APH Connect Center at 800-232-5463.