

Lighthouse

Tampa Lighthouse

for the Blind

Tampa • Winter Haven

News Update

Maximizing independence and providing employment opportunities for persons who are blind or visually impaired

July 2004

A PROMISING FUTURE AWAITS ENEIDA TORRES



Eneida Torres with her teacher Lisa Merwarth

Eneida Torres has had many challenges in her young life and exemplifies how it is possible to achieve success in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles including a rare genetic progressive eye disease that is accompanied by other complications.

Eneida received her computer training at the Lighthouse where she learned how to use JAWS, the speech program in widespread use among computer users who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Tools and devices that Eneida uses for her schoolwork include several state-of-the-art electronic devices, specifically a closed-circuit electronic magnification system, a talking dictionary, computer software that opens and

reads computer documents, and a portable, keyboard-sized Type 'n Speak electronic note-taker which stores her information and reads it back to her.

In an interview with her and Lisa Merwarth, her Leto High School resource teacher just before her May 25th graduation, Eneida talked about her senior trip to Disney World where she and her fellow seniors took part in Grad Night.

Eneida is especially proud of having been awarded a \$1,000 private scholarship in response to a Tampa Tribune article last December, specifically for being named Florida's Most Promising Visually Impaired High School Senior by the Florida Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, a statewide association for professionals who work with children and/or adults who are blind or visually impaired. In addition, she recently won an award at a recent Florida State Spanish Conference for a two-minute speech that she had prepared and delivered at the conference.

Eneida is now looking forward to entering Erwin Tech soon to prepare for and pursue a challenging career in court reporting.

MacDILL FAN MAIL

The following is a letter written by Amir Mina, Arabic Linguist/Analyst who was based in Qatar at the time.

I am writing to commend Operator 18 for the great service she has been providing me in contacting my family. As a Linguist, I take pride in supporting our mission in Operation Iraqi Enduring Freedom.

It is very difficult for me to stay away from my family for long periods without continuous communication with them; My wife and my two teenage children. Thanks to your great staff of professional operators, I have been able to take care of many of my family matters while I was in Baghdad, and currently in Qatar.

Please allow me to give my special thanks to Operator 18. For the past 8 months, she has been so cooperative, polite, efficient, patient, and professional. Also, I appreciate all of you for your great help. By keeping me connected with my family and other parties where I could take care of business, you all have been contributing to the success of our mission. Again, thank you all, and God bless America

Samir Mina, Arabic Linguist/Analyst ISG-Qatar. *(Editor's note: Operator 18 is Lighthouse employee, Pat Taylor, Lead Operator of our switchboard contract)*

Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind

Tampa • Winter Haven

SUMMER TRANSITION PROGRAM 2004

Our second annual Summer Transition Program placed greater emphasis this year on providing hands-on work experiences at several sites throughout the Tampa Bay area. Within the span of a few days, the teens were placed into work experiences at local business. Some of them put in a brief stint in the Lighthouse mailroom. Thanks go out to our hard working placement team.

This program was initiated and

funded by the Division of Blind Service; and carried out by the Lighthouse in partnership with the Vision Programs of Hillsborough and Polk County School Systems. The program ran in parallel in both our Tampa and Winter Haven facilities. However, it was not all work and no play as the teens were all treated to a trip to Disney World at the end of the program.



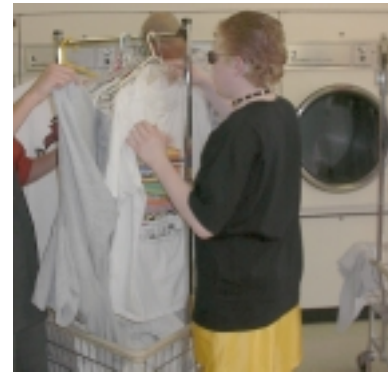
Many jobs start in the mailroom



Good clerical jobs are also a popular choice



Entry-level jobs in the service sector are currently plentiful



An outing to a local laundromat provides important lessons in clothing care.



Dressing for success is important for landing that highly sought-after job



A bicycle with counterweight mounted on a high-wire at a local museum demonstrates important scientific concepts.

RE-ENGINEERING MY LIFE

By Tom Place



Tom Place in his home office working on his modified computer

Tom Place, Lighthouse graduate, provided his story below in an open letter recently mailed to our contributors:

I spent my first 60 years with vision. I never even wore sunglasses. So it was a real shock when without warning I lost my eyesight.

It all started one day several years ago when I was visiting my son in North Carolina. I had pneumonia but didn't know it. Suddenly I collapsed right there in the airport and was rushed to a hospital in an ambulance.

My son was told that I was probably going to die – and if I lived, I'd be a vegetable. My wife flew up and stayed by my side in the hospital for 22 days.

Obviously, I didn't die. And thankfully, my mental faculties are just about the same as before. But my life has changed forever. For one thing, I need supplemental oxygen wherever I go.

I was also blind. I can still see some shapes and colors but I can't focus and I have a totally blind spot in the center of my vision. I can't read and I can't drive.

As a lifelong engineer I've built and managed all sorts of industrial plants

during my career. Now I needed help "re-engineering" my life — and that's exactly what the Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind did for me.

First I was treated by Dr. Petito, the Lighthouse's low vision doctor. He helped me stabilize – and even restore – some of my sight. That little bit of vision really makes a difference, especially for getting around.

That's when I enrolled in the Lighthouse computer-training program. What a challenge! If you're blind, you can't just use a computer mouse to "point and click" at the screen. You instead have to memorize hundreds of keystroke commands. But the Lighthouse teacher was very patient, encouraging me to stick with it.

Today, I'm on my third computer at home. I stay in touch with all my friends, children and grandchildren by email. I "read" the local newspaper by bringing it up on the computer and listening to it in synthesized speech. I do consulting again too, writing up reports and making recommendations for plants. I even assist with my wife's photography business.

That's why I recommend the Lighthouse to everyone who might benefit. Most are older, like me, with age-related vision loss, and I tell them the Lighthouse can help them stay independent and enjoy life to the fullest.

My wife and I also know a couple with a young child who is visually impaired and we suggested they take him to the Lighthouse. There it was determined that little Joseph can see and his vision is now being stimulated further. At the same time, the Lighthouse early intervention program is helping him learn to move about and explore the world.

So not only has the Lighthouse changed my own life, but I've seen it give hope to many others too. That's why I urge you to join with the many caring people who support these vital, wonderful services.

Editor's update: In a recent interview with Tom Place, he described several of his other involvements worth mentioning. He is active with a support group consisting of fellow visually impaired adults that meet monthly in Polk County. He plays golf often at Cleveland Heights and bowls Monday nights. With the little bit of residual vision he has left, he maintains his own yard and home. He often assists his photographer wife, Cindy, with the many props that are often needed. And finally, he is writing his autobiography in what little spare time he has in his busy schedule.

COLUMBIA RESTAURANT'S 7th ANNUAL COMMUNITY HARVEST

During the month of September, customers of any of the six Columbia Restaurants may designate a favorite charity to receive a donation of 5% of the tab at no extra cost to the customer. Please make a meal date and designate **Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind** as your choice to receive this gift.

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR MAILROOM SERVICE CONTRACT WITH THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS IN JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

Thanks to Mike Roach, Mailroom Supervisor, for providing much of the background information

In January 2001, the Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind secured its second federal service contract, which involves complete operation of the mailroom and records management unit of the Army Corps of Engineers in Jacksonville, Florida. The contract also involves the maintenance and duplication of maps used by the Corps. This project created five full-time jobs for legally blind persons in the field of mailroom clerk, mapping services, and records management. The mailroom includes full UPS and Federal Express services in addition to those provided by USPS. Reports from the contracting office indicate the highest level of satisfaction and confidence in recent years with the operation of the mailroom and the other services covered by this contract.

September 11th presented a huge challenge in dealing with the anthrax threat that substantially increased health risks for all of our mailroom employees. They wasted no time implementing new safety procedures to deal with the threat and have, to date, avoided any related incidents.

The Jacksonville District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was formed in 1822 and is involved in Navigation Improvement Projects, Flood Control, Beach Erosion Control, Water Pollution Control, Urban Studies, Environmental Projects, assisting in disaster situations, and the awarding of Military/Civil Construction Projects. The Corps was headquartered in the Federal Building since 1967 until its recent move in 2002 to their current location in the Prudential building in the Riverside District of downtown Jacksonville.



Joed Cannon organizes the batch tags

The Lighthouse team provides daily service to over 900 Corps employees locally and another 100+ at remote locations throughout Florida, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. The employees perform their jobs with little adaptation ranging from large print letters on folder and bins to using a lightweight camera that you wear on your head to view detail maps. The camera is similar to virtual reality glasses that are sometimes associated with video games.

During the 2002 relocation, the mailroom faced the additional challenge of providing support to offices located in three buildings for a two-month period and two buildings for a six-month period until all Corps offices were centrally located. The Lighthouse team never missed a beat in providing timely services!

The Mailroom team plays an integral part of the day-to-day functions of the corps. To start off the daily routine, between 400-500 pieces of mail are received, sorted, and properly logged in for accountability purposes. There are 32 staff offices located on 4 floors with each floor having East/West wings and a

breezeway in the center of each that have staff offices also. The team's responsibility is for ensuring that four mail runs are made daily to distribute the mail to staff offices. There are other job requirements, as requested, during the course of the daily routine. Life is never dull at the Corps. Daily vigilance is also required in the monitoring of daily mail for suspicious packages/letters that may contain explosive devices or possibly anthrax. Safety is another issue and practiced by all.

In addition to the daily postal mail, the mailroom staff is responsible for the receipt/logging in/delivery of all Federal Express/UPS/Airborne/DHL Express packages. On an average day 30-40 packages are handled. At the close of business each day the staff is responsible for bulk mailing to 42 outlying activities plus numerous other daily mailings. An average outgoing day has between 400-500 pieces of mail to be metered properly and readied for the nightly postal pick up. The mailroom employees are also responsible for preparing anywhere between 25-30 pieces of Federal Express mailings per day. This is accomplished using a FedEx Powership computer program.

Maintaining the Records Holding Area (archived records) is another of the daily responsibilities. There are in excess of 4,000 boxes of official historical records. Daily monitoring of these records is required to assess if records are due for destruction or transfer to the Federal Records Center. A computer program is used for this purpose. Daily actions usually occur for retrieval of boxes of records to be brought to the headquarters and delivered to staff offices for use on different projects. Records are stored at an off-site 6,000

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Tampa Lighthouse For The Blind

16TH ANNUAL BEEPBALL CLASSIC

ANOTHER LIGHTHOUSE WIN AND A WIN-WIN FOR THE COMMUNITY



NOT AS EASY AS IT LOOKS!

This fielder for the All-Stars team gets on his hands & knees to search for the elusive beeping ball that was literally under his nose!

The Lighthouse's 16th Annual Beepball Classic, held April 17, 2004, raised over \$7,000 for programs serving persons who are blind or visually impaired. The Lighthouse was also a winner on the playing field as they handed the Media All-Stars a 4-0 shutout. All the collective talent possessed by the several local celebrities couldn't overcome the handicapping procedure imposed by the blindfolds that had to be worn by each fully or partially-sighted player, regardless of the team he or she was playing for. To "level the playing field," even the visually impaired players with residual vision had to don blindfolds.

Lee Kimbrell, accomplished veteran Beepball player, scored three of the four runs. His stepson, David, scored the only other run. In doing so, he was only one of two players to score a hit during the entire game. David, who has Downs syndrome in addition to visual impairment, did not let his disabilities stand in the way of his outstanding play. Lee helped David prepare for the game by coaching him prior to game day.

Beepball is a modified form of softball that enables blind or blindfolded players to play the game by sound versus sight. The ball is equipped with a special beeper and the bases are tall sponge-rubber columns that contain loud



Several players from both teams get together after the game to pose for a group photo

buzzers. The soft spongy columns are specially designed so that a player is able to run into it at a full sprint without risking injury. With practice, a player can develop his or her sense of timing and sound localization in order to bat or field the ball successfully, but it helps to have some softball experience regardless of level of eyesight. Some of the local celebrities have been able to improve considerably once they have played two or more years in a row.

Special thanks go out to all of the participating team players, all of whom were volunteers. Lighthouse players included Jim Davis, Jay Forry, Lee Kimbrell, Pedro Marrero, David Niven, Victor Panoff, Marcos Rios, and Don Thompkins. All Star players included Eddie Austin, Walt Belcher, Shawn Harrison, Jeff Houck, Phil McNiff, Steve Otto (coach and player), Will Rodgers, Bob Ross, Debra Schrills, Frank Sanchez, and Earnest Thomas.

We wish to recognize our many sponsors who were the key to the event's financial success: Major League Sponsors (\$1,000+) included Lee Kimbrell and L. V. Thompson. Banner Sponsors (\$650) included Carlton Fields and MetLife. Inning Sponsors (\$400) included WFLA-Tampa; Thompson, Sizemore & Gonzalez; Hilb, Rogal & Hobbs Insurance; and USAA. Player Sponsors (\$250) included Catherine W. Real, P.A.; Camatron

Sewing Machine; Philip Dinkins; Al Sanchez; and Marsha Weisse, CPA. Drawing prizes were donated by Applebees, Belleview Biltmore Resort, The Brunchery Restaurant, Caspers Company, CDB's Italian Restaurant, The Childrens' Museum, CK's Revolving Rooftop Restaurant, Comfort Inn, Lowry Park Zoo, Olan Mills Portrait Studios, Pebble Creek Golf Club, Publix Super Markets, Saddlebrook Resort, Shells, St. Pete Times Forum, Starlight Cruises, Strike & Spare Fun Centers, Suncoast II, Sweet Tomatoes; Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Tampa Bay Devil Rays, Tampa Metropolitan YMCA, Tampa Theater, Target Stores, The Tampa Tribune, Westchase, WQYK 99.5, and Wrights Gourmet. Other contributors included A-1 Temp, American Chemical & Building Maintenance; Annette Amendola, Kermit Arnold; Bern's Steakhouse, Lucille M. Boyd, Eleanor G. Brown, Estelle Brown, Ruth Doyon, Foam-Pak, Mark A. & Paula J Gaudio; Agnes Gilbride; James & Nancy Gleason; Hanlon Ceilings; Maxi Aids; PAR, Inc., Rex Meighen & Company, Clair O. Palmerino, Rotary Pen Corporation, Tampa Printing; Tampa Thermogravers; and Wire Products Inc. of Florida.

Finally, we wish to thank the following volunteers who gave up their Saturday morning for this event: In addition
CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



David Niven was one of only two players to score a hit during the entire game

to the team members all of whom were volunteers (mentioned above), special thanks go to our game announcer Dick Bower and his wife Terri, Davin Brannon, Matthew Brannon, David Chesbrough, Rebecca Chesbrough, Sue Glaser, and several volunteers from T. Rowe Price.

COMPUTER TRAINING FOR PERSONAL ENRICHMENT

The Lighthouse began its first computer training class in 1990 to provide adaptive training to blind and visually impaired job seekers whose jobs were expected to require using a computer. A few years ago, we saw a need to expand computer training to retirees and other individuals who wanted to use computers to enhance their communication skills and keep pace with their sighted peers.

The students, many of whom are retired, learn many of the same skills that are covered in the vocational computer-training program including letter writing and using email. The adaptations include ZoomText for enlarging screen print and images, and JAWS which is a speech program to read aloud what is on the monitor. Other topics covered include general Windows terminology and procedures, word processing programs (e.g. Notepad, Microsoft Word); Email (Outlook Express); Internet Access

(Internet Explorer, AOL, or whatever the client has or expects to use at home).

Classes are available in both the Tampa and Winter Haven locations. Each class has a maximum enrollment of 4 students. Each student is assigned a computer. The class operates from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday for six weeks. The only qualification for anyone interested in taking the class is to know the location of the alphabet keys on the keyboard. Those who do not yet possess this basic keyboard skill may take an introductory typing/keyboarding class – this class is available at both locations and is free. Age barriers don't exist because motivation has proven so far to be the greatest indicator of success, regardless of the student's age, level of education, or ability to read and write.

A new Computer Club that was started back in January is held on the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

MAILROOM SERVICE CONTRACT, continued from Page 4

sq. ft. warehouse that is only used for storage of these documents. In addition to the driver, a legally blind warehouse employee assists with this function. Responsibility for identifying permanent records that are authorized for shipment to a Federal Records Center is also part of the tasking. In the year 2003, over 400 boxes were re-boxed and shipped to the Federal Records Center. The employees are also responsible for the preparation of paperwork for retrieving these records from the Federal Records Center if needed by Corps personnel.

Another function of the contract is to maintain the Corps Map Files and is performed by a legally blind individual. There are over 100,000 corps project maps located in this area. The Map Files clerk is responsible for customer service, research, copying, and scanning project maps as requested. Scanning is

done on the computer and then sent as electronic files or copied onto CD's. Different media is used for these items. They include 35mm and 105mm Aperture Cards plus full size mylar copies. Map files maintain nautical charts for the service area in the Jacksonville District. Approximately 190 Nautical Charts from the Gulf Coast, and around the State of Florida, including the Intra-coastal waterway are stocked. These charts also cover parts of the Georgia Coastline, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands, Jamaica, Haiti, Bahamas, and Bermuda.

Engineers doing research, tracking changes in the coastline and rivers and for navigation use nautical Charts on a regular basis. Inventory status is tracked on available charts, current status, and tracking of the charts as they are revised, updated and released. Quad

Maps are also important to the Corps. We stock approximately 1300 different quad maps from the State of Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. For example, for an Engineer to just cover the area around the city of Jacksonville would require approximately 30 Quad Maps.

The mailroom team is a dedicated professional group of individuals that are always ready to go the extra mile to provide courteous, friendly service to the customers. To ensure continuity, in the event of absences, all personnel are cross-trained in a variety of duties. They have received many positive comments from Corps employees for their professionalism and courtesy. We at the Lighthouse are proud of this high-functioning team and give credit to each team member and their excellent leader, Mailroom Supervisor Mike Roach.

CONTRIBUTORS

Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind truly appreciates all of our donors. All contributors support programs and services at Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind. Although we can only list contributors who give gifts totaling \$50 or more, we are grateful for each gift. The names listed below include those whose contributions were received between January 1, 2004 and June 30, 2004. If we have inadvertently omitted or misspelled your name, we apologize and ask that you please let us know by calling (813) 251-2407.

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Tributes

We thank the following contributors for choosing Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind as a means of expression to honor or memorialize a friend or loved one

In Memory of

Pauline Baumann
Susan & David Dudas

Gloria Diaz

Jane F. Leone

Ruth Hammer

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Madeline Hoffmann

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Father of Renee Valdez
Rough Riders 1st US Calvary

In Honor of

Molly Emmons

John D. Young

Patricia Parker

Edna M. Boling

COMPUTER CLASSES *continued from Page 6*

2nd Friday of each month from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon at the Tampa facility. Any current or former Lighthouse computer training student is invited to attend. Members share tips and help

each other solve common computer-problems. The group is self-sustaining as the Lighthouse instructors turned the Club completely over to its members in April.

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Association for Education and Rehabilitation
of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER)

National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving
People with Blindness or Visual Impairment (NAC)

National Industries for the Blind (NIB)

Upcoming Events

August 26

United Way Day of Caring
Picnic (Tampa)

September 6

Labor Day
(closed)

November 25-26

Thanksgiving holidays
(closed)

December 3

Graduation/Holiday Party
(Winter Haven)

December 8

Children's Holiday Party
(Lakeland)

December 10

Graduation/Holiday Party
(Tampa)

December 23-24

Christmas holidays
(closed)

December 31

New Years Eve
(closed)

Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind

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