

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

HIGH ACHIEVING STUDENT UNDETERRED BY SUDDEN BLINDNESS



Darlene works on her computer, with Petey, her guide dog, always nearby.

Darlene A's life changed forever when, as a high school student, she was the victim of a terrible auto accident. The driver, a friend of hers, had fallen asleep at the wheel. The accident, which nearly killed her, left her totally and permanently blind. The accident happened only a short amount of time before her high school graduation. Losing her eyesight was devastating to her emotionally, leaving her with a great deal of uncertainty about the future.

Amazingly, Darlene managed to pull herself together and finish her high school studies so she could graduate from Lake Wales High School on schedule. After graduating, she worked as a receptionist until the company she was working for closed its doors. She soon realized that she would have to further her education if she was to improve her career prospects. She also needed to learn how to use a computer specially equipped with speech to prepare for college. She began attend-

ing adaptive computer classes at the Lighthouse's Tampa location, then later continued her classes at the Lighthouse's Winter Haven location after moving back to Lake Wales.

Darlene faced many challenges adjusting to life as a blind student for the first time when she began attending Polk Community College, but with the help of her family, friends, and teachers, she succeeded in a big way. The training she received at the Lighthouse enabled her to travel about the campus (with the help of her guide dog, Petey) and use her computer for her studies. She tape recorded classroom lectures, used a reader (provided by Division of Blind Services) for required reading, and worked very hard to master the course material. As a result, she earned a perfect 4.0 grade point average at Polk Community College where she received the 2006 Allen T. Cole Distinguished Academic Achievement Award and was inducted into the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. Darlene continues her education at Warner Southern College where she is completing her BA degree in organizational management, again with a perfect 4.0 grade point average, earning membership into the Sigma Beta Delta Honor Society.

Darlene decided to give back to the community by tutoring other students in English and Math and serving as a volunteer for the National Association of Blind Students. Her story got the

July 2008

attention of the Polk Community College administration and she was asked to give the commencement speech to the December, 2007 graduates. Her captivating speech was interrupted several times with applause as she described the many challenges she encountered as a student faced with blindness for the first time. She gave credit for her success to her family and friends, especially her father who instilled into her perseverance and a strong work ethic.

Darlene plans to continue her studies following graduation for a Masters degree in Counseling.

COLUMBIA RESTAURANT'S 11th ANNUAL COMMUNITY HARVEST



Harvest days are coming soon. During the month of September, Columbia Restaurant customers may designate a favorite charity to receive a donation of 5% of the tab at no extra cost. This year also marks Columbia Restaurant's 102nd anniversary. Please make a September meal date and designate Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind as your choice to receive this gift.

Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind

Tampa • Winter Haven

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ELIDA BARRIA - VOLUNTEER TRANSLATOR



Elida translating for Gersey Rodriguez who is taking tests for a vocational evaluation.

Elida Barria began losing her eyesight a few years ago due to deterioration of her optic nerves in both eyes. By 2005, she was legally blind and needed to learn how to carry out normal day-to-day activities with extremely limited vision. She enrolled in the Lighthouse's daily living skills program which included personal and home management, meal

preparation, typing, communication skills, orientation and mobility travel training, and learning about community resources. Elida's strong drive to function independently enabled her to excel in all of her classes. In addition, Elida, who is bilingual, began helping out whenever an interpreter was needed to work with individuals who spoke only Spanish. In addition to interpreting, Elida serves as a role model, encouraging other students to become as independent as she has. She has also been freely sharing of her knowledge of community resources that she developed at the Lighthouse. Elida has been extremely reliable – so far she has not missed a day that she was scheduled to interpret. Elida was recently recognized for her work by the United Way of Tampa Bay at their annual volunteer awards luncheon.

JUDY BLACK, LION OF THE YEAR



Judy travels extensively about the community with the help of Wink, her guide dog.

Judy Black is another dynamic high achiever who has used what she learned at the Lighthouse to benefit others. Judy

has been recently honored "Lion of the Year" by the Cypress Gardens Lions Club because of her positive outlook toward her blindness, her success at maintaining an independent lifestyle, and her many contributions to the community as a member of this Lions Club. Judy frequently sells hot dogs, popcorn, and other snacks at concession stands set up by the Lions Club in theaters for the performing arts, at shuffleboard tournaments, and at other special events. Proceeds benefit the Southeast Guide Dogs, our Winter Haven facility, and other organizations benefitting persons who are blind or visually impaired.

Judy and her guide dog, Wink (who is also named on her plaque), live in Winter Haven only a few blocks from our Winter Haven facility. In her limited spare time, Judy and Wink enjoy long walks and bus outings together.

LIGHTHOUSE HOSTS REGIONAL BRAILLE CHALLENGE™



The Braille Proofreading competition was just one of the several challenges of the day.



This future participant was here to practice and observe.



The students played Braille Bingo while awaiting the awards presentation.



The high level intensity shown by this young competitor mirrored that shown by others.



Plant High School's Pep Band energized the students and volunteers.



The scorekeepers had their work cut out for them in scoring all of those braille tests.

Blind students from all over the Tampa Bay area met at the Lighthouse on February 29th to go head-to-head in a Braille competition. An academic competition unlike any other, the Braille Challenge is a national program of the Braille Institute of America, Inc., that encourages development of Braille skills which are needed by totally blind persons to increase their chances of success in the sighted world.

At this day-long event, participating students were enthusiastically supported by parents, teachers of students with visual impairments, community volunteers, Plant High School's pep band, and Ms. Wynne Tye, General Director of Exceptional Student Education. Ms. Mary Ellen Elia, Superintendent of the School District of Hillsborough County, joined the Challenge for the awards ceremony afterward to congratulate all the competitors. During the competition, participants in grades 1 – 12 competed



The Balloon Man (in background) made this student's "horse" head dress.

in five challenging categories requiring them to read, transcribe, and type Braille using a device called a Perkins Braille. Each category was designed to test their Braille skills in several areas – reading comprehension, Braille spelling, chart and graph reading, proofreading, and Braille speed and accuracy.

The regional Braille Challenges across the country represented the first step on the road to the national competi-

tion which is held at the Braille Institute of America headquarters in Los Angeles. The Braille competitors are all vying for the 60 spots available in the national competition. The top scorers in the preliminary round (regional competitions) will advance to the nationals and get the opportunity to represent their state as they compete against the top blind students from across the United States and Canada.

Braille literacy is the most under-rated and overlooked of all the literacy issues in America; and advances in technology have not replaced the need for blind children to learn to read using this vital medium, created by Louis Braille in 1824. The Braille Challenge™ was created to motivate blind students to continue their study of Braille. Studies have shown that, while only 30% of blind adults obtain full-time employment, 90% of those who beat the odds are Braille readers.

20th BEEPBALL CLASSIC: LIGHTHOUSE VICTORIOUS 18 OF 20 GAMES! Lighthouse 7, All Stars 2



Jessie Pope is determined to hit that ball!

The Lighthouse's 20th Beepball Classic, held April 19th at the New York Yankees Community Field at George M. Steinbrenner Field was an exciting, action-packed game. Both teams generated their share of excitement at bat and on the field. Mother Nature contributed a picture-perfect spring day and there was a decent turnout of spectators and alumni players. A special anniversary continental breakfast was provided for alumni, volunteers and contributors. The alumni were all recognized and a special presentation was made by Lee Kimbrell to Coach Otto who received a special 20th Anniversary Beepball, complete with display stand, and an assortment of other historic Beepball memorabilia.

Just before game time, the Coleman Middle School Orchestra played the National Anthem. Once the game started, there was plenty of action but no score until the 2nd inning. During the third inning, the All Stars pulled ahead 2 to 1, but the Lighthouse managed to tie the score by the end of the inning, then struggled to move into the lead in the 4th inning. The Lighthouse really came alive in the 5th inning, scoring 4 runs to bring the final score to 7 to 2. Lighthouse runs were scored by Jessie Pope (2), Richard Morales (2), Lynn Hunt (1), Triston Hunt (1), and Lee Kimbrell (1) who made two



Pinetop Peterson, with his bizarre mask, makes it look like "Child's Play!"

other solid hits that were successfully fielded by Alicia Roberts (Channel 8 Traffic Reporter) and Denise Palmer (Tampa Tribune President and Publisher). Mike Maltby also made a solid hit, but it was successfully fielded by B. C. Mannion, Feature Writer for The Tampa Tribune. Mike got his comeuppance later by successfully fielding a hit by All Stars Pinetop Peterson of the Quivering Rhythm Hounds right after he donned a ghoulish mask. City Councilman Charlie Miranda and New York Yankees' Executive Vice President Phil McNiff scored the two All Stars Runs. As the game neared the final innings, the All Stars Coach Steve Otto, in desperation, set up a glass "mojo" jar near Lighthouse batter Lee Kimbrell and pranced around him in an effort to put a hex on him. It seemed to work as Lee's subsequent hit was fielded out. At the end of the final inning, both teams had played impressively at bat and on the field.

Players for the Media All Stars included All Stars Coach Steve Otto, Columnist for The Tampa Tribune; Phil McNiff, Executive Vice President of The New York Yankees; Alicia Roberts, Traffic Reporter for News Channel 8; B. C. Mannion, Feature Writer for The Tampa Tribune; Charlie Miranda, Council Member for the City of Tampa;



Lee Kimbrell makes it to base, scoring a run for the Lighthouse.

Denise Palmer, President and Publisher for The Tampa Tribune; James Tokley, Poet Laureate; Scott "Pinetop" Peterson of the Quivering Rhythm Hounds; and Walt Belcher, TV Critic for The Tampa Tribune.

The victorious Lighthouse team included Chuck Marchese, David Niver, Jesse Pope, Joseph Patrick, Lamar Coston, Lee Kimbrell, Lyn Hunt, Annie Villano, Mike Maltby, Richard Morales, Rodney Rolle, Tracey Sidlasky, and Triston Hunt.

In addition to entertainment, Beepball Classic provides a public exhibition that showcases the abilities rather than the disabilities of people who are blind. It also demonstrated the capabilities of sighted players who were blindfolded and learned how to adapt to sightlessness with practice.

Beepball is patterned after softball with some modifications. Players for both teams with any amount of useful vision are required to wear blindfolds. The softball has a beeper that emits a beeping sound that batters and fielders listen for. Bases are equipped with loud buzzers, enabling blind/blindfolded players to locate them by sound. Only one of the two bases (1st or 3rd) is used after a hit. The buzzer in the base farthest from the ball in play is activated to prevent noise interference with the

20TH BEEPBALL CLASSIC

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A successful All Stars fielding attempt.



The victorious Lighthouse team.



The All Stars put up a tough battle!

sound of the beeping ball. A run is scored when the batter who makes a successful hit makes it to base before the ball is fielded. If a fielder locates the ball, picks it up, and raises it above his/her head before the batter gets to base, the batter is out. There are six fielders: two in right field, two in center field, and two in left field. In each section of the field, one fielder plays the infield and the other plays the outfield.

We wish to thank everyone who came out to watch, participate, or assist with this event. Special thanks again to **Steve Otto, Coach of the All Stars** for his active coaching role throughout most of our event's history. We also wish to thank **James Gleason, Marine Raider, Director of the Friends of the Tampa Bay Marines; The Coleman Middle School Orchestra** led by its **Director Edward Thanz** for their outstanding rendition of the National Anthem; **Lighthouse Staff** and family members for organizing and carrying out this event; **Richard Bower**, our announcer and his wife **Terri** who helped with concessions; **Dave Kelsey** for umpiring, and **Phil McNiff** with the **Tampa Yankees**, and **George Steinbrenner** with the **New York Yankees** for providing the use of the Community Field along with support staff. We wish to congratulate **Wharton High School** for winning the attendance

trophy, presented by **James Gleason** and the Friends of the Tampa Bay Marines for the high school with the most members in attendance.

We wish to recognize our sponsors and other contributors who were key to the event's financial success. Our **Major League Sponsors (\$1,000 +)** were Amerigroup and Lee Kimbrell. **Inning Sponsors (\$500)** included Ferman Motor Car Company; Hilb, Rogal & Hobbs; and an anonymous contributor. **Player Sponsors (\$250)** included Jim and Debbie Brown; MetLife; William and Patricia Morris; PAR, Inc.; James and Judy Stefan; and The Victory Foundation. **Other cash contributors** included Affordable First Aid/Millar Medical; Bern's Steak House; Adeline Bailey; Barbas Koenig Nunez Sanders & Butler, P.A., Inc.; Col. Lonnie M. Davidson; Shirley A. Dawley; Phil Dinkins and Ed Lally, Molly Emmons, Manuel and Della Escobio; Florida Reading and Vision; Chuck and Ruth Marchese; George and Edith Pasisis; Joe and Yolanda Rodriguez and The USAA Foundation. We also thank the following people for advance sales and/or donations of tickets: Jim and Debbie Brown, Josephine Buckner, James Gleason and The Friends of the Tampa Bay Marines, Wallace Hardee, Chuck and Ruth Marchese, Edelmiro and Raquel Santiago, and Earl Ware.

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The Lighthouse raised just over \$9,000, all of which will benefit our Tampa-based programs serving persons who are blind or visually impaired.

2008 SUMMER TRANSITION PROGRAM PREPARES BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED YOUTH FOR ADULTHOOD



The Daily Living Skills classes focus on teaching skills that help these youthful participants learn how to live independently.



Work experiences often help participants develop vocational goals. Working in this cafeteria is relevant to this student's career goal in culinary arts.



Trips to the gym show each participant various exercises that can contribute to a healthy lifestyle.



Those attending our Winter Haven program benefit from activities that parallel those conducted in Tampa.

It is common knowledge that, even under the most normal of circumstances, the teen years are full of challenges and turmoil. Teens who are blind or severely visually impaired, especially those who have additional disabilities, face even greater hurdles. The Lighthouse's Transition program was designed to help its teen participants overcome the additional challenges they face as they approach adulthood. When the program was established in 2003 as a summer-only program, it soon became apparent



Computer skills are required by many jobs in the community, therefore computer training is a staple in the program.

that the participating kids needed more than what a summer program could offer. Therefore, the notion of a year-round Transition program became reality in early 2007 with weekly classes and monthly field trips. During the summer, the program maintained the same 5-days-a-week schedule as before.

During the summer program, the main focus was once again on providing meaningful work experiences at local business and weekly paychecks



While most work experiences take place in the community, this task involves preparation of a mass mailing for the Lighthouse.

along with valuable real-world learning experiences. Class time was spent learning about business attire, resume preparation, interacting with coworkers and supervisors, and other related topics. Other class subjects included meal preparation, banking and finances, personal and home management, computer training, and socialization.

It wasn't all work and no play, however. Fun activities and outings such as bowling, skating, horseback riding, and visits to area attractions were scheduled throughout the program to give the hard-working teens periodic breaks.

CONTRIBUTORS

Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind truly appreciates all of our donors. All contributions 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, 2008 and June 30, 2008. 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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National Industries for the Blind (NIB)

Upcoming Events

September 1-30
 Community Harvest
 Columbia Restaurant
 (see bottom of Page 1)

September 1
 Labor Day (closed)

October 16
 United Way Day of Caring (Tampa)

November 27-28
 Thanksgiving holidays (closed)

December 5
 Graduation/Holiday Party (Tampa)

December 12
 Graduation/Holiday Party (Winter Haven)

December 25 & 26
 Christmas holidays (closed)

January 1
 New Years Day (closed)

Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind

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