

# 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*

### PATIENCE WITH PERSEVERENCE FINALLY PAYS OFF FOR SHERI SIEGEL



*Sheri has been successfully working for Hilton Reservations for nine months.*

This young lady has never wavered in her determination and has always maintained a positive attitude when it came to looking for a suitable job. She was a regular at the Friday morning Job Club meetings held at the Lighthouse where she and fellow job seekers took part in mock interviews, polished their resumes, built networking skills, and held

discussions on the best ways to land an interview. She applied for numerous jobs; time and time again, she was turned down. This did not deter her or diminish her resolve – she just kept applying for other jobs and coming to the Job Club. It seemed as though she knew that she would eventually get the job she wanted.

Sheri is not your average job seeker. She has been legally blind most of her life from optic atrophy (deterioration of the optic nerve) which has left her with very little eyesight. She uses a guide dog or a long cane to get around. Unlike many other job seekers out there, Sheri appeared to be resistant to feelings of negativity regarding her job search.

On Monday, April 26, 2010, all of Sheri's efforts finally paid off when she

### January 2011

was hired by Hilton Reservations as a customer service representative taking reservations at their call center. Delighted that she finally had an opportunity to prove herself, she poured all of her efforts into making her new job a success. So far, it's been eight months and her supervisors have been most helpful and cooperative in making sure that her job is successful. Additionally, they continue to submit positive reports about her progress.

Sheri also expresses great appreciation for the commitment and hard work of Lighthouse team members Rich Petras (recently retired Job Development Specialist), Sherryl Cook (Employment Specialist), and Jennifer Hyland (Assistive Technology Specialist) who all worked with her and her fellow Job Club members in helping them with their job searches.

### SCARLETT'S SISTERS LEARN AT AN EARLY AGE THAT "TIS BETTER TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE"



*Scarlett (center) with her mother and older sister.*

Scarlett who is visually impaired is currently being served in our Early Intervention program (for visually impaired children, ages 0 – 5) which is based in our Winter Haven facility. In a surprise announcement, Scarlett's sisters told their parents that they wanted to give all of the money that would have been spent on them for Christmas, to the Lighthouse to help support the program that is helping their sister, Scarlett, to develop school-readiness and other skills taught in the Early Intervention program. Her sisters range in age from eight to ten years.



*Scarlett hangs an ornament on the tree.*

# Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind

Tampa • Winter Haven

## Contact Information

### Tampa

Administrative Offices  
Transition Services  
Rehabilitation Services  
Low Vision Clinic  
Magnifiers & More Store  
AbilityOne Contracts  
Technology Services  
1106 W. Platt Street  
Tampa, FL 33606  
Phone: (813) 251-2407  
Fax: (813) 254-4305

### Winter Haven

Early Intervention  
Transition Services  
Rehabilitation Services  
Low Vision Clinic  
206 Avenue D N. W.  
Winter Haven, FL 33881  
Phone: (863) 299-3633  
Fax: (863) 299-3559

### Web Site

[www.tampalighthouse.org](http://www.tampalighthouse.org)

### E-mail

[tlh@tampalighthouse.org](mailto:tlh@tampalighthouse.org)



*The website's new Store page.*

The Lighthouse's website ([www.tampalighthouse.org](http://www.tampalighthouse.org)) has undergone its first major overhaul since it was created 13 years ago. The old website was "Bobby-Approved" meaning it met basic standards for accessibility, however the new website has additional features including 1-click settings for print enlargement and switching to white print on black background or vice versa at the top of each page.

Visitors to the new home page are greeted by a slide show of images representing many of the Lighthouse's programs. Each page features fresh new photos and updated graphics. The layout is straight-forward with a PROGRAM SERVICES tab that brings you to a listing all of the Lighthouse programs in alphabetical order. A click on any of these will bring you to a complete description of the program and a contact link for more information. There is also a link to the eligibility guidelines in the narrative section on the Home page. Clicking on the Media Center tab takes you to a page that lists recent press releases (State of Vision license tag, Beepball, and a short video on the Lighthouse titled "Leading the Way in Tampa Bay"). Clicking on About Us

will take you to a page stating our mission and describing our history.

You can click on "Magnifiers and More Store" from any page in the website. This will take you to a partial listing of items sold in our store along with photos of popular items. You can click on any of the items shown to enlarge the image on your screen. If you wish to make a donation via credit card to the Lighthouse, just click on the Donate Now tab located halfway down the left side of home page.

The new website was designed to be located more readily due to a greatly expanded pool of available search terms that users can choose to enter into popular search engines.

In recent years, the Lighthouse has greatly expanded its technology services that are now available for employers and businesses as well as job seeking clients.

Finally, job seekers can click on Employment Opportunities from the home page, read about available positions, and complete the application forms on his/her computer. There are many other features including Frequently Asked Questions, Resource Affiliations (funding sources), Contact Us, etc.

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Tampa, FL 33606-2142

# JAWS® FOR PAWS AND OTHER HIGH TECH CHALLENGES



*Training for guide dogs begins at a very early age. This adorable labrador puppy is already in "uniform."*

Guide or service dogs for the blind have been around since the early 1900s. Until recently, these amazing service animals have gone about their business oblivious to common distractions in their environments. In fact, it's their resistance to distractions (other people, animals, and noise) that makes them so effective as guide dogs. However, it has been recently discovered that there is a down side to the technology that has opened doors for so many including people with visual impairments, particularly in the areas of speech and screen enlargement technology. Until recently,



*Training now includes controlled exposure to synthetic speech commonly used by blind computer users.*

there have been few conflicts combining old with new technology. No one anticipated what would happen when computers started talking to people who couldn't see their screens. It didn't take long before guide dog owners began noticing their dogs becoming agitated whenever their computers started talking to them by means of JAWS® (Job Access With Speech) output. It was apparent that the synthetic or robotic speech often confused and frightened guide dogs and interfered with their ability to function. So, what is one to do

if he/she has a guide dog and is a regular user of a computer equipped with JAWS®? This is where the new program, JAWS® for PAWS comes in. JAWS® for PAWS desensitizes guide dogs to the unnatural speech patterns emitted by JAWS®-equipped computers by gradually increasing the exposure of the dogs to a variety of JAWS® speech sound patterns. Over time, the guide dogs become accustomed to the synthetic sounds of JAWS® and are able to carry out their guide functions without being distracted.

Another modern-day issue is the silence or absence of engine sound from hybrid or electric cars. Blind persons waiting to cross streets depend on sound cues of idling or accelerating internal combustion engines to help them judge when it is safe to cross a street. Recently, car makers have started equipping hybrids or electrics with sound-emitting devices to help overcome this problem, however there are still thousands of hybrids without these devices out there. However, guide-dogs do not require extra training to protect their owners from these vehicles, even when they are running solely on (silent) electrical power.



## **MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATIONS AND DRIVERS LICENSES NOW ALLOW \$1 CHECK-OFF DONATIONS TO BENEFIT CERTAIN PROGRAMS FOR THE BLIND**

As of October 1, 2010, everyone who registers a motor vehicle in Florida will be able to make a \$1.00 donation to benefit blind babies and youth throughout Florida, including our local area. Also beginning October 1, 2010, everyone who applies for a Florida driver's license will be able to make a \$1.00 donation to benefit programs for seniors who are blind or visually impaired throughout Florida, also including our local area. According to

the executive director of one of the affected agencies, "These voluntary contributions will help us provide critical vision services and improve the quality of life for babies, young people, and seniors who are visually impaired or blind." Former Governor Charlie Crist and the Florida Legislature approved legislation (House Bill 399) in 2010 to create the two voluntary contribution check offs. Representative Kurt Kelly (R-Ocala) and Senator Mike Fasano

(R-Port Richey) introduced the legislation during the 2010 Legislative Session.

We strongly support this easy method of contributing to our programs. We also encourage supporting the Lighthouse's work in other ways such as contributing through our website ([www.tampalighthouse.org](http://www.tampalighthouse.org)), by mailing in a donation, or by calling 813-251-2407.

## 2010 GRADUATION AND HOLIDAY PARTY



*Tampa grads proudly display their hard-earned diplomas.*

Our graduations combined with holiday parties took place on December 10th and 17<sup>th</sup> in Tampa and Winter Haven respectively. These events focused on the accomplishments of our graduates who all worked hard to achieve a higher level of independence. Many of our Independent Living graduates had returned to develop or improve their adaptive computer skills. Others had gone into job placement and needed to upgrade their computer skills for their jobs.

In Tampa, the graduates and their guests began arriving early to mingle with each other, along with old friends and acquaintances. The graduates then lined up and walked down the aisle to the tune of Pomp and Circumstance. Rehabilitation Services Manager Sheryl Brown opened the program with a welcome to everyone. Then each of the instructors presented their words of inspiration to



*A festive selection of holiday music was provided once again by Coleman Orchestra.*



*Edward Thanz, Coleman Orchestra Director receives recognition award from Lighthouse Contracts/Grants Manager Veronica Chesbrough. Michael Hoskinson, Coleman's Principal (L) attended to share Mr. Thanz's honor.*

the graduates. The diplomas were then given out to the graduates in attendance. Sheryl Brown gave a special recognition to Lighthouse receptionist Carmen Davis who is often referred to as the "Voice of the Lighthouse." Despite Carmen's 18 years on the job, she elected to take assistive computer training earlier in the year to learn how to use a screen reader (speech program). Nearly everyone in the room knew Carmen and appreciated



*Receptionist Carmen Davis (L), the "Voice of the Lighthouse" with her computer teacher Jennifer Hyland.*

her courage in going back to the classroom in a challenging learning environment. Following the presentation of diplomas, the graduates and family members were invited to give testimonials about their experiences and share the contrasting differences of where they were before and after their training. Most of our current graduates and even some former graduates were inspired to stand up and speak. Lighthouse alumni are always invited to our graduations; many accept and come year after year to enjoy the festivities.

A party following the graduation ceremonies at both locations featured a complete lunch, graduation cake for dessert and bags of candy treats to take home. The Coleman Middle School Orchestra – Chamber Ensemble, directed by Edward Thanz, returned to provide holiday music for our Tampa



*A full lunch was served, consisting of Cuban sandwiches, potato salad, fruit salad, chips, and graduation cake for dessert.*



*These former graduates have been returning faithfully each year to our graduation holiday events.*

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*Tampa Lighthouse For The Blind*

# 2010 GRADUATION AND HOLIDAY PARTY

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Winter Haven's graduation and holiday party was well attended.

graduation and holiday party. Contracts and Grants Manager Veronica Chesbrough presented an award in recognition of Coleman's more than ten years providing holiday music to Tampa's graduation and holiday parties. The Coleman Orchestra was also recognized for playing the national anthem at our Beepball games the last few years. It is also worth noting that, after the end of each performance, Mr. Thanz always has his students spread out among our clients to intermingle with them over lunch.

At our 17<sup>th</sup> annual Winter Haven graduation party, Winter Haven High School Ensemble, directed by Michael Lawson, returned for its third straight year to provide holiday music for our graduates and guests. The State of Florida let us use the Nora Mayo Hall as they have for all of our past holiday gatherings. Santa and Mrs. Claus, played again by Paul and Geneva Albright, returned to entertain, help serve the food, and hand out bags of candy. Paul and Geneva continue to give generously of their time near the holidays every year to visit local schools as Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus.

For both parties, we wish to thank our staff for their efforts and creativity in



Decorations included colorful poinsettias on the tables.

organizing these holiday events. In addition, we would like to thank Division of Blind Services staff for attending and participating in both of our holiday events as they have each year.

## TAMPA GRADUATES (in alphabetical order)

Jean Abbey, Susie Adams, Cecil Cala, Marangely Candelario, Keta Carmickal, Elizabeth Charney, Dorothy Crossley, Jean Dalton, Carmen Davis, Martha Dudley, Donald Eaton, Phillip Eaton, Evelyn Ebenstein, Theodore Forbes, Sharon Fowler, Irmgard Geary, Betty Gibson, Edna Gonzalez, Dorothy Gordon, Margaret Hannis, Christine Hargraves, Krista Hauf, Franklin Hill, Kenneth Hinkley, Jack Johnson, Sheneka, Johnson, Lillian Jones, Olive Jones, Robert Knight, Amalia Owens, Robert Perkins, Edith Piasecki, Stanley Porter, Mary Salomone, Freda Shusterman, LeVarne Spann, Anna Spinella, Vivian Stanger, Richard Thomas, Debra Thompson, Harriett Voyles, Barbara Ward, Kathleen Ware, Betty Webb, Perdencie White, Mary Williams.

## WINTER HAVEN GRADUATES (in alphabetical order)

Susan Asencios, Viola Baun, Donald

Bayer, Robert Braze, Lamar Cadwell, Phyllis Calhoun, John Christianson, Christina Corgnell, Jesus Cruz, Roderick Fuller, Juan Gonzalez, John Hall, Joseph Harris, Evelyn Herman, Yolanda Hernandez, Sue Hillard, Wiley Jones, Charlotte Klockow, Jean Michel, Edwin Owens, Mary Reyna, Phillis Richards, Oswald Stewart, Jose Torres, Elwyn Waite.

## LIONS CLUB MEMBERS IN WINTER HAVEN PRESENT CHECK TO LIGHTHOUSE



Left to right: Susan Sirois, Lions Club Secretary (with her guide dog); Eva Truelock, Lighthouse Rehabilitation Teacher; Sharon Lewis, Lions Club President.

Sharon Lewis, Lions Club President presents a \$500 donation check for the Lighthouse to Eva Truelock, Rehabilitation Teacher. Susan Sirois, Lions Club Secretary who is visually impaired, has received services from the Lighthouse and was taught by Eva.

## CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON NEW WINTER HAVEN FACILITY



Many participated in the groundbreaking including this group of current and previous blind or visually impaired patrons of the Lighthouse.

On August 5<sup>th</sup>, the Lighthouse held its groundbreaking ceremonies at 9 a.m. at the construction site which is next to its current Winter Haven facility. Several dignitaries were invited to be a part of this event including Winter Haven Mayor Jeff Potter, Winter Haven City Commissioners Jamie Beckett and Nat Birdsong, and Polk County Commissioner Jean Read. Lighthouse Board President Debbie Brown presided over the formal ceremony. Others in attendance included Paul Simmons from Polk County Transit Services, United Way of Central Florida's President Terry Worthington and Chief Operating Officer Penny Borgia, representatives from the contracting firm Semco Construction, Lighthouse staff, current and former patrons of the Lighthouse's Winter Haven facility, among others.

The actual groundbreaking took place immediately following the dignitaries' presentations. Several groupings of attendees donned hard hats and posed with silver shovels adorned with ribbons. The groupings included the contracting team, dignitaries, Lighthouse patrons, and Lighthouse staff. The key people who are the ones most closely involved with the project posed for photos at the posted sign containing the artist rendering of the new building.

The new 10,000 square-foot building

will provide more than quadruple the space of the current facility which will be subsequently torn down to make room for parking. The additional space has been badly needed for several years and is expected to serve the program needs of the facility and clients for several decades. The new building will be paid for in part from the proceeds of the recent sale of property in Lakeland; the balance will be funded by government and foundation grants.

The programs to be housed by the new building include Daily Living Skills,



TOP: SEMCO Contracting Team  
BOTTOM: Project Management Team

Computer Training, Assistive Technology, Early Intervention for infants and children ages 0 – 6, Low Vision Clinic, and Case Management. It will also include a first aid room, a new retail store of aids and appliances, and a covered loading/unloading area at the main entrance.

## HALLOWEEN PARTY CHILLS AND THRILLS



The dance floor was a popular place.

The Lighthouse Teen Transition Program's annual Halloween party, held Saturday October 30<sup>th</sup>, provided a fun creative outlet for all that teen energy. The kids, costumed up to the hilt, got out on the floor and danced the night away, thanks to the Delta Gamma volunteers and DJ Marvelous Marvin.



Organizers Jennifer Hyland (L), Sue Glaser, and two wicked looking jack o' lanterns.

Dinner was donated by a local McDonalds through one of the parents. Plenty of snacks and soft drinks were also available. The Tampa teens were joined by their fellow teens from Winter Haven, Lighthouse of Pinellas, and Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind of Pasco County.

*Tampa Lighthouse For The Blind*

# 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 July 1, 2010 and December 31, 2010. If we have inadvertently omitted or misspelled your name, we apologize and ask that you please let us know by calling (813) 251-2407.

## \$10,000 and up

Publix Super Market Charities

## \$2,500-4,999

Dorothy Thomas Foundation  
K. W. Grader Foundation  
Walter S. Pierce Foundation

## \$1,000-2,499

Mr. & Mrs. James Feutz  
MetLife Foundation's  
Volunteer Ventures Prog.

## \$500-999

Mr. & Mrs. Kyle Bailey  
George D. Curtis Jr.  
Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Freeman  
Mr. & Mrs. Herbert J. Lanham  
Cindy & Cliff Olstrom  
Winter Haven Lions  
Eyesight Conservation Fund

## \$250-499

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E. Elamin  
Anthony M. Everett  
Powelson Meacham  
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Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Pientka  
Mary Piparo  
Mrs. Allen Reeves  
Jim Stefan  
Talcott Family Foundation  
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I. Clay Thompson Jr.  
R. Thomas Vormwald

## \$100-249

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Cypress Gardens Lions Club # 12625  
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Donna Soulam  
Ed Smith  
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Mrs. E. M. Webber  
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## \$50-99

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Karen Brannen  
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Golda Brunhild  
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Matthew F. Wilbur  
Patricia Williams  
Maureen B. Young  
Barbara S. Zack

## In-Kind Donations

Quicksilver Recycling

## 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

### **Ana Marie Baldor**

Carlos Baldor

### **Marjorie Blanton**

L. D. Blanton

### **Ray & Virginia Borsani**

Lawrence Borsani

### **S. A. Cannon**

Robert Cannon

### **Elena Caycedo**

Elena Mario

### **Maj. Milton E. Davidson**

Lonnie M. Davidson

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Charles Mahan

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### **Estle Evans**

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### **Mathew D. Fletcher Sr.**

Bruce Glass

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C. T. & Catherine M. Eggleston

### **Margaret Maridon**

Suzanne Maridon

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Second District Court of Appeal employees

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## In Honor of

### **Britny Belskis**

Antonio & Jennifer Belskis

### **Barbara Collen**

Seymore & Barbara Collen

### **Tommy B. Denton, Jr.**

Sara Denton

### **Gordon Dewhurst Family**

F. Stephen Dewhurst

### **Lois M. Lewis**

Neva Abbey

*Continued on Page 8*

# Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind

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## CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



### *In Honor of (continued from Page 7)*

#### **Thomas Mueller**

Janet Mueller

#### **Lee Nasehi**

Stacy O'Brien

#### **Orline Hall Stevens**

Carl Stevens

#### **Patrick Soja**

Anonymous

#### **Vivian Stanger**

Kenneth & Elizabeth Hinkley

#### **Eva Truelock**

Mike Truelock

#### **Scarlett Turner**

Madeline & Lucille Turner

#### **Norma Elizabeth Weissing**

Norma & Dennis Weissing

## **MAJOR FUNDING SOURCES**

City of Tampa CDBG, funded by HUD

Hillsborough County BOCC

City of Winter Haven

Polk County BOCC

State of Florida, Department of

United Way of Central Florida

Education/Division of Blind Services

United Way of Tampa Bay

## **AFFILIATIONS**

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

Florida Association of Agencies Serving the Blind (FAASB)

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

National Industries for the Blind (NIB)

## Upcoming Events

### Monthly - 2nd Thursday, 11:00 a.m.

Polk County Blind Veterans  
Fred's Restaurant -  
2120 Harden Blvd.  
Lakeland, FL 33803

### Monthly - 4th Saturday, 12:00 noon

Polk VIP/ACB  
Clara's Butterfly Café  
1533 S. Combee Road  
Lakeland, FL 33801

### April or May TBA

23rd Annual Beepball Classic  
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon  
Location - TBA

### May 30

Memorial Day (closed)

### July 4

Independence Day (closed)