



Lighthouse

News Update

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

A PROMISING FUTURE AWAITS LUCAS LANGFORD AFTER GRADUATION



Lucas (R) with his Agriculture Teacher, Mr. Altizer. (His arm is in a sling from an accident at home).

When Lucas first began participating in the Lighthouse's Transition program in 2008, the thought of entering the work experience phase may have been a bit intimidating. Born with a rare hidden genetic disorder that leads to macular degeneration-like symptoms usually before adulthood, this wasn't discovered until Lucas was 14 years old. In the four years that followed, he lost quite a bit of vision and was considered legally blind. Nonetheless, Lucas proceeded without hesitation, knowing that his future could depend on what he was able to accomplish in the program. More recently, Lucas has offered to mentor some of the newer Transition students who hope to follow in his footsteps. He wasn't asked to do this – he came to his teacher, Elizabeth Underwood (a certified teacher of the visually impaired), and volunteered completely on his own to take on this responsibility at Publix where he works. Elizabeth was "blown away" by Lucas's request.

Tampa Lighthouse For The Blind



Holding a potted plant grown on site. His class raises money selling vegetables at a roadside stand next to the school.

"When I was talking to Lucas yesterday he asked if any students would be placed at his Publix this summer. He said if they were and he was working at the same time he would "help them". I was impressed he was so proactive!"

At the time, Lucas was working 20 - 25 hours a week at that store (in addition to going to school full-time prior to graduation).

Lucas' prospects weren't always rosy. Prior to enrolling at Simmons Career Center, Lucas was rapidly falling behind in school. He was unmotivated, lacked direction, and underperformed. He frequently skipped classes and was suspended for various reasons. Then he got involved with the wrong crowd, and even had brushes with the law. All of his frustration led to intense anger. His family became concerned, even alarmed. What kind of future would he have, especially with serious visual impairment? They began searching for answers. They had him meet with

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Lucas's job at Publix in Brandon began with his Summer Transition Work Experience a few years ago.

the pastor of their church. Friends and relatives tried to advise him. He entered a dropout prevention program along with anger management. The combined efforts did plant a seed of hope, but much more was needed to turn things around.

Lucas was diagnosed with a learning disability when he was in elementary school. Even though he was able to see large print, he had difficulty visually making the translation. However, Lucas had no trouble understanding the exact same words in auditory format. This paved the way for a very effective accommodation for Lucas. Many highly successful people in history have had the same problem. He was assigned to work with ESE teacher Kathee Moore. Ms. Moore quickly saw this young man's potential and also saw the inherent goodness in his heart. Elizabeth Underwood, his vision teacher, joined forces with Moore to help turn things around for Lucas.

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Contact Information

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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
Magnifiers & More Store
Technology Services
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Winter Haven, FL 33881
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SUZANNE CIPTAK - OVERCOMING ADVERSITY



Suzanne learns adaptive computer skills from her instructor, Jennifer Hyland.

Suzanne's story exemplifies how quickly life can change – and not always for the better. First, she was diagnosed with breast cancer a few years ago and was treated with surgery and chemotherapy. Suzanne was very hopeful when the cancer appeared to go into remission. Unfortunately the cancer came back this past January, this time in her brain, causing seizures. She was treated with radiation therapy, but the lesions from the tumors caused her to become totally blind.

On top of everything, Suzanne's husband passed away, adding another major loss to her life. It was painfully obvious that her life had changed forever. She was faced with difficult choices and decided to make a new beginning by seeking help from the Lighthouse. This was a major turning point for her.

Suzanne began with our six-week independent living skills class, learning everything from personal grooming and managing medications to cooking meals and organizing

personal items with tactile labels.

"I learned so much and felt so empowered to do things for myself again," she said. "I truly cannot say enough about the Lighthouse staff. They were professional, courteous and patient. Plus I loved the socialization. My fellow students and I became a kind of support group."

Suzanne also received orientation and mobility instruction in order to learn how to travel about the community on her own, using a long white cane. She learned how to cross busy streets by listening carefully to the sounds of traffic patterns. Her next step was to enroll in guide dog school where she gained even more confidence and a greater sense of freedom with her new trained guide dog.

Suzanne is now living on her own, safely and independently. She has set new goals including computer training at the Lighthouse to learn how to operate a modified computer with a screen reader (speech output). She also wants to go back to school and earn a Master's degree in Social Work so that she can become an advocate and counselor for abused children. "My wish is to make a difference," she proclaims.

Suzanne has had a difficult road to travel and has made the most of it with her positive approach to dealing with problems of such magnitude. Her teachers at the Lighthouse are confident in her ability to continue her forward progress and reach her goals.

TAMPA FACILITY RECEIVES FACE LIFT; NEW WINTER HAVEN BUILDING EARNS LEED SILVER CERTIFICATION

Extensive improvements were completed earlier this year to bring the Tampa facility to the same level as our new Winter Haven facility. The improvements included painting inside and out, new carpeting, new roofs on both buildings, replacement of older HVAC units, and retiling of

the Activity Room floor. The new color schemes (tans and Earth-tones) were patterned after those in the new Winter Haven building.

The new Winter Haven just received a LEED Silver Certification for meeting a set of rigorous environmental and energy standards.

JOB CLUB, A VITAL TOOL USED IN JOB PLACEMENT



An animated roundtable discussion taking place indicates the high level of involvement among the participants.

With so many desperately searching for employment, getting the help needed to get a job can be a daunting task. For many ordinary jobless people, it's a major challenge to find viable leads and land interviews. For those in the Lighthouse's Job Placement program, visual impairment or blindness just adds to the challenge. As difficult as it may seem, many who seek help from the Lighthouse land good jobs each year. The good news: In 2011, the Lighthouse worked with 21 Job Placement clients who are blind or visually impaired to gain skills to help them to obtain a variety of jobs in such areas as retail, grocery, government, corporate, and professional.

The Job Club, coordinated by Dana Dawson, our Job Development Specialist, works with job seekers who are blind or visually impaired, regardless of age, as long as they are legally old enough to work. The only requirements are willingness and ability to work. Criminal background checks may also be required based on a prospective employer's requirements. Job Club meetings, usually held on Fridays, involve strategy discussions, mock interviews, guest speakers, resume development, tips on completing applications, and proper grooming, dress, and appearance. Other subjects include work attitude, work ethic, attendance, punctuality, working

well with others, and overcoming common pitfalls such as making errors and not following instructions. All activities are focused on helping each participant land that all-important job.

Job Development often involves educating employers as to the benefits of employing persons who are blind or visually impaired and available incentives and assistive technology that often involves turn-key installation of a desktop computer with screen reader (speech), screen magnification, or both. Such devices are often provided without cost to the employer. The employer often benefits from gaining a highly reliable employee with an above-average appreciation of his or her job. This employee will also have a greater chance of remaining on the job longer than the average employee and will have better attendance, punctuality, and reliability. As a graduate of the Job Club, the employee will have received a good deal more training in workplace decorum than the average person on the street.

Job Club meetings are held at both Lighthouse locations – Tampa and Winter Haven. Tampa's serves Hillsborough County participants and Winter Haven's serves those in Polk County.

Any employer can take advantage of free no-obligation services that are available to them. The Lighthouse will send out its Job Development Specialist to conduct a job analysis that is used to determine any job's feasibility for a visually impaired candidate. The job analysis will also examine options for assistive (computer) technology and may involve a specialist in that area. Once a candidate is placed, an Orientation and Mobility specialist will teach him or her how to get to and from work using the bus or other transportation and will also provide instruction on how to get from the bus stop into the



The Winter Haven Job Club participants have a wealth of experience in their respective fields but have been impacted by the slow economy.

building and to the office, cafeteria, rest rooms, etc. The Job Development Specialist will provide follow-up visits for 60 days post-hire. If the client is rated as satisfactory at 60 days, he/she is considered to be a successful placement. Even after the 60 day follow-up period, if there are any problems, the Lighthouse will likely provide needed assistance in an effort to help the person remain employed.

SYKES ENTERPRISES WINS ABLE TRUST'S LARGE EMPLOYER AWARD

Sykes Enterprises, a large international corporation based in Tampa, has received ABLE Trust's statewide Large Employer of the Year award for going beyond the call of duty in working with individuals with disabilities. The Lighthouse nominated Sykes for this award because of the number of persons they employ locally who are blind or visually impaired, many of whom were placed there by the Lighthouse.

Sykes specializes in customer support and other business process outsourcing. Their growth was highlighted by the recent announcement that they were adding 600 new jobs.

Amy Kessel and Joe Behr, managers at Sykes, attended the June 15th awards luncheon in Tallahassee to receive the award. Both managers have visually impaired employees on their teams.

24th BEEPBALL CLASSIC - All Stars Finally Turn the Tables



Coach Steve Otto relishes his well-earned victory which was over two decades in the making.

The Lighthouse Sluggers were handed their first-ever defeat by the Media All-Stars, an all-celebrity team made up of television news anchors, meteorologists, local politicians (including Mayor Buckhorn), newspaper columnists, etc. The team came out swinging and never looked back.

Lighthouse Slugger Lee Kimbrell scored the game's first run in the first inning. It was downhill after that for the historically victorious Lighthouse team when Tampa Tribune Columnist Joe Henderson scored a run for the All-Stars in the second inning. That run was followed by the first of two runs by County Commissioner Kevin Beckner. The Lighthouse's Lee Kimbrell went on to score two more runs. However that left the Lighthouse a run short as News Channel 8's Gayle Guyardo also scored a run. Kevin Beckner's 2nd run put the All-Stars in the lead by 2 runs but the Lighthouse's Lee Kimbrell narrowed that lead to one run with the final hit of the game.

WFLA 907 AM radio personality Ted Webb did a superb job in his debut role as the game's announcer and agreed to return as announcer next year for the 25th Beepball Classic. Ted Webb had played for the All-Stars



Media All Star player Gayle Guyardo scored one of the four hits that led to her team's impressive victory.



Fielding must be done strictly by sound (beeping ball) and feel as the players are either totally blind or blindfolded.

in previous years. Coach Steve Otto had pledged to retire once the All-Stars were able to put a win in the history books, but the Lighthouse is urging him to reconsider until after next year's 25th Beepball Classic.

Players for the Media All-Stars included Kevin Beckner, Hillsborough County Commissioner; Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn; Yvonne Yolie Capin, City of Tampa Councilwoman; Harry Cohen, Chair Pro Tem, City of Tampa Council; Tim Guidry, Foundation Administrator for the New York Yankees; Gayle Guyardo, NewsChannel 8 Co-Anchor; Joe Henderson, Tampa Tribune Columnist; Jeff Houck, Tampa Tribune Food Writer; Dave Hughes, Channel 8 Producer; Steve Jerve, Chief Meteorologist for NewsChannel8;



Lighthouse Slugger Lee "Grand Slam" Kimbrell's three hits weren't enough to overcome the All Stars' momentum.

Leslee Lacey, NewsChannel 8 Traffic Reporter; Lisa Montelione, City of Tampa Councilwoman; Adrienne Pederson, Tampa Tribune Reporter; and Leigh Spann, NewsChannel8 Meteorologist. Pinetop Peterson, an All-Stars regular for years, was unable to attend for health reasons. His hilarious Mojo Hand and corncob hat were missed as well. We wish him well and hope he can be here next year.

Players for the Lighthouse Sluggers team included Lonnie "Leadoff" Coston, Youlanda "Daring" Daffron, Marsha "The Mauler" Gibson, Lee "Grand Slam" Kimbrell, Greg "Line Drive" Lindberg, Mike "Mayhem" Maltby, Elwin "Swings to the Wind" Merrill, and David "Son of Grand Slam" Nivers. Former Lighthouse Board Member Vandellon Holland was a late addition to the Slugger's lineup.

Beepball, patterned after softball, is adapted to enable full participation of the blind players. Players on both teams must wear blindfolds unless they are totally blind. The softball has a beeping device that allows batters and fielders to locate it by sound. Bases are foam rubber columns covered in blue plastic. Standing about four feet high, they are equipped with buzzers to enable the players to locate them by sound and to run into them without injury. Only 1st or 3rd base is used after a hit. A run is scored when the batter who makes a legal hit gets to

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Tampa Lighthouse For The Blind

24th BEEPBALL CLASSIC

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The Lighthouse Sluggers were defeated but still have a very impressive record spanning over two decades.



The Media All-Stars, after over two decades of consecutive defeats, finally came out on top.



Boy Scout Troop 304 returned for the fourth consecutive year to serve as color guard.

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 field section, one fielder plays the infield and the other plays the outfield. The pitcher and catchers are the only sighted players who do not wear blindfolds during the game.

The weather cooperated with a warm but breezy sunny day. The Coleman Middle School Orchestra returned for its fifth year to play the National Anthem and baseball-themed music. The FRC-sponsored Boy Scout Troup 304 returned for its fourth year to present the color guard.

We thank everyone who came out to watch, play, or help with this event. Special thanks go out to Steve Otto, All-Stars Coach for his coaching role throughout most of our event's history, his entertaining columns that promote this event, and his role in recruiting the All-Stars players. We thank each of the players of both teams for coming out to participate. Special thanks go out to James Gleason, Marine Raider and Director of the Friends of the Tampa Bay Marines for all of the advanced ticket sales and support of this event. We also thank Coleman Middle School Orchestra and Director Edward Thanz for performing the National Anthem (5th straight year);

the Lighthouse team for one of the longest winning streaks for any sporting event in history (from 1993 through 2011); Lighthouse Staff and family members for organizing this event; Col. Lenny Richoux for coming to our rescue by offering to umpire at the last minute; and the Tampa Yankees and New York Yankees for providing use of the Community Field and support staff.

We wish to recognize our sponsors and contributors who were key to the event's financial success. Major League Sponsors (\$1,000) included Lee and Sally Kimbrell, New York Yankees, and Tampa Tribune. Inning Sponsors (\$500) included Kuhn Honda Volkswagen; The Law Office of Jeremiah D. Allen, P.A.; Jim and Debbie Brown; and Larry Bevis and UBS Financial. Player Sponsors (\$250) included Par, Inc.; Willis Insurance of Florida; Regions Bank; Antionette Wheat, CPA; and Independent Living Aids, LLC. Door Prize Sponsors included PRP Wine International, Tampa Bay Rays (4 upper-level seats, and Muvico Theaters (Centro Ybor 20, Starlight 20, Muvico Theaters). Finally, our many other Inkind Sponsors included American Stage Theatre, Antonio's Pasta Grille, Applebee's, Bok Tower Gardens, Bon Appetit Restaurant, Busch Gardens, Cason Photography, Clearwater Maine Aquarium, Courtyard by Marriott, Crowne Plaza Tampa – Westshore,



Coleman Middle School Orchestra, led by Director Ed Thanz, returned for the 5th consecutive Beepball Classic.

Donatello Restaurant, Explorations V Children's Museum, Fantasy of Flight, Florida Aquarium, Florida Museum of Photographic Arts, G. Elliot's Brunchery Restaurant, Hooter's, The Tampa IMPROV Comedy Theater, Maggiano's, McDonald's, Mekenita Mexican Grill, Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI), Olive Gardens #1025, Orlando Science Center, Publix Super Market, St. Petersburg City Theatre, SeaWorld/Aquatica/Discovery Cove, Side Splitters comedy Club, Skippers Smokehouse, St. Petersburg City Theatre, Starlite Cruises, Sweet Tomatoes Restaurant and Catering, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Tampa Bay Lightning, Tampa Bay Rays, Tampa Theatre, The Florida Aquarium, US Airways, Vigo Importing, Westchase Golf Course, Willie's, WonderWorks Orlando, and Wright's Gourmet House..

This year's Beepball Classic netted \$7,500, all of which will benefit our Tampa programs serving persons who are blind or visually impaired.

A turning point appeared to be when Lucas paid a visit to Simmons Career Center during a Hillsborough County Schools VIP (Visually Impaired Persons) Club trip. Lucas chose to attend the EXCEL Program at Simmons and then attend the Career Center. When Lucas had to select a course of study that would lead directly to a job after graduation, he was torn between Construction and Agriculture. Then he met Mr. Altizer, the Agriculture teacher. The two appeared to “click” right away. Once Lucas entered the Agriculture program, there was no turning back. It was as if he finally found his calling. The Lighthouse Transition program came into play, providing him with “real world” work experience at Publix after extensive coaching in job seeking and retention skills. Having a new purpose in life enabled Lucas to

carryover his motivation into the work environment. He turned out to be a model employee, carrying out a variety of tasks including stocking shelves, bagging groceries, and working in produce.

Lucas’s mother was quoted as saying, “If it wasn’t for Simmons Career Center, Lucas would be in jail.” However, his family has provided a tremendous amount of needed support to help him succeed. They never gave up their efforts or hopes to help him succeed. His mother takes him to work, doctor’s appointments, and school as needed. She often has to take time off work to do all this, but has never hesitated to do so. Other family members and friends have also stepped in to help whenever needed. Everyone’s efforts have paid off. Lucas already has job offers waiting after graduation. His

agriculture teacher at Simmons is retiring and has asked Lucas to work with him when he opens his business. This is the ultimate compliment because his agriculture teacher knows ALL of the present and former agriculture students! Lucas also has other prospects doing landscaping. He plans to continue working at Publix at least part time.

In 2010, Lucas put his newly-found confidence to good use by attending Aviation Challenge at the Marshall Space Center in Huntsville, Alabama, which is similar to space camp and includes such activities as scaling walls, simulated parachute landings (with zip lines), pole climbs, and others including some carried out by Navy SEALs in training.

When Lucas is not working or going to school, he enjoys fishing and hunting with family and friends.

10th SUMMER TRANSITION PROGRAM AND COLLEGE WEEK HELP PAVE THE WAY FOR BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED TEENS TO SUCCEED



Students learn a variety of communication and computer technology skills which are essential in today’s workplace. They read digital audio books using e-readers specially designed for visually impaired persons.

This year’s Summer Teen Transition Program continued its essential role in preparing teens who are blind or visually impaired for life after graduation. A variation of this is College Week which provided an intensive on-campus orientation to learn all about college life. College Week took place at the University of South Florida and was a 24-hour a day

involvement as the students stayed in a dorm the entire week to make the experience more realistic. Several teachers of the visually impaired (TVIs) and college students who are studying to become TVIs stayed with them throughout each day and night. This year, eleven students from Hillsborough County and seven students from Polk County participated in College Week which took place in mid-June.

Even though Transition is provided year-round, it’s the summer program that really packs in a lot over a 5-day a week, 5-week period when the kids are out of school for the summer. During this time, they learn independent living skills such as managing personal finances, clothing care and selection, apartment hunting, smart shopping, grooming and appearance, etiquette, preparing resumes, completing job applications, and going through mock interviews. A central part of the program is the three-week work experience at an actual job

site. The schedule includes field trips to shopping malls, laundromats, banks, an apartment complex, restaurants, hair salons, grocery stores, and more. Students were paid for their work experiences and were taken to the bank to cash their paychecks, providing yet another learning experience.

Recreational activities also served as learning experiences designed to teach fitness, social skills, and development of wholesome leisure time interests. These activities included bowling; hiking; biking; boating; swimming; rock climbing and many others.

Programs ran simultaneously in our Tampa and Winter Haven facilities with 21 students in Tampa and 17 students in Winter Haven. This program was funded by the Division of Blind Services; and carried out by the Lighthouse in partnership with the Vision Programs of Hillsborough and Polk County School Systems.



Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind

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- City of Tampa CDBG, funded by HUD
- City of Winter Haven
- State of Florida, Department of Education/Division of Blind Services
- Hillsborough County BOCC
- Polk County BOCC
- United Way of Central Florida
- United Way Suncoast

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
- September 3rd
Labor Day (closed)
- October 11th, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Tampa Day of Caring Picnic
- November 22nd & 23rd
Thanksgiving holidays (closed)
- November 30th
Graduation/Holiday Party
Winter Haven
- December 7th
Graduation/Holiday Party
Tampa
- December 24th & 25th
Christmas holidays (closed)
- January 2nd, 2013
New Years Day observed
(closed)