



Lighthouse News Update

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

TABLET COMPUTERS A BOON TO USERS WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED



Gilberto Perez (foreground) and Vanessa Saucedo are nearing the end of their training.

Technology is once again proving to be the great equalizer for those with visual and other disabilities, enabling them to have all of the same benefits accorded to those without disabilities. The latest example of mainstream technology to make its way into the hands of the disabled population is the Apple iPad® (including the new Mini version) with its countless applications (called “apps”), Bluetooth capabilities, internet access, access to books and publications, email/contacts, and many other electronic tools, all in a compact package.

The new iPad® Mini’s accessibility settings take some of the features a bit further. For people with disabilities, it provides adaptations that can be used without the need for additional outside software in most cases. Users with visual disabilities have full-screen zoom magnification and other features such as large text, guided access, option



Vanessa Saucedo carries out an exercise on how to use the calendar function effectively.

to invert colors, VoiceOver screen reader (more about that later), left/right volume adjustment, and support for playback of closed-caption content.

Our students are taught how to use VoiceOver to explore items on the screen and listen to a description of each item they touch on the screen. They learn how to use Siri for voice commands to conduct web searches. One of the most impressive aspects of Siri is that users can speak to it using ordinary speech as Siri has an uncanny ability to understand different accents and dialects of each user. It will display an on-screen text of what you said and speaks it back to you to provide confirmation that you were understood. Siri is able to adapt to the user the more it is used. According to Apple, Siri understands more than 20 spoken languages and can read/speak more than 35.

Another useful feature students

Winter 2013

learn is how to use bookmarks to return to where they left off if a session is interrupted. They can also set up desktop icons to use for quick access to regularly visited websites and send links by email to family, friends, or colleagues. They can create Word and other documents using an available wireless keyboard. Those with some useable eyesight are taught how to access other available low vision apps. Totally blind students are taught how to use speech programs that read aloud to them or through standard earbuds or Bluetooth headsets. They are taught calendar functions including appointment reminders. Internet safety is also taught including proper access to and sending of attachments, use of antivirus and related software, and general awareness. They learn how to use the camera and video functions and to manage and share photos and videos.

Those with significant hearing loss in one ear can set the audio from stereo to mono – this converts stereo sounds so that all of the sounds are sent to the good ear.

In an effort to keep our Transition (teen) students up to date on this highly relevant technology, the Division of Blind Services purchased an iPad for each student who successfully completed the iPad course at the Lighthouse and passed the final exam. Fortunately, all of the participants did pass the course and received their new iPads®.



Contact Information

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Magnifiers & More Store
AbilityOne Contracts
Technology Services
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Tampa, FL 33606
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Fax: (813) 254-4305

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TONY CATALANO LEARNS EMPOWERMENT ALONG WITH DAILY LIVING SKILLS



Tony applies his considerable artistic talents to create this beautiful flower basket

Tony Catalano, 84, received unexpected benefits when he came to the Lighthouse to learn daily living skills to cope with his visual impairment. He also learned self-empowerment. Tony was an active retiree, creating oil paintings, teaching photography, displaying his art at the local Library, working on his computer, and riding his bike until corneal edema robbed him of much of his eyesight. He tried to continue his usual activities, but was unable to do so. When he learned that a corneal transplant would improve his vision considerably, he encountered a major insurance and medical bureaucracy that threatened to derail his efforts to get the operation. The doctors saw too much risk to operate on his only remaining eye (he lost the other eye in an accident years ago) and his insurance company turned him down. His wife who had been making all of his appointments for him developed health problems of her own and was unable to continue. It was up to Tony to fight the "system" so he turned to the Lighthouse. However, instead of fighting his battles for him, his case manager and teachers took the approach of "empowering" him to accomplish his goal. Tony's case manager arranged for him to make his phone calls from her office, then helped him keep track of his efforts to navigate the system. His other instructors taught him self-advocacy

skills to encourage him to stand up for himself whenever pursuing medical treatment or obtaining services of any kind. Soon Tony was able to take over this complex process on his own and follow through as needed. He used a bold black marker and paper to make notes and track his calls. Tony's persistence paid off as he finally convinced his doctors and insurance company to consent to the transplant. Once he arrived at the medical facility (after traveling some distance to get there), he discovered that he was assigned to the wrong doctor. The facility then told him he would have to reschedule his procedure with the correct doctor. Tony then spoke up and insisted that he hadn't waited for months, traveled so far, and fought so hard to get the doctor he wanted only to be turned away. Fueled by his earlier successes, Tony's persistence paid off again and he was reassigned to his chosen doctor and prepared for surgery. Once the procedure was underway, the doctor discovered that Tony's cornea was actually in better-than-expected shape, but was shrouded by scar tissue that was easily removed, improving his vision considerably.

After the surgery, Tony returned to the Lighthouse to attend the new Project Enterprise program where he and fellow Lighthouse clients come in and work on crafts projects and engage in recreational pursuits. He has shared his experiences with the others and inspired them with his own successes, urging them not to be afraid to stand up for themselves.

Tony is still having some fluctuations in his vision as his eye continues to heal, but is gradually resuming his former activities and doesn't hesitate to seek timely medical attention on his own when needed.

TRANSITION TEENS CELEBRATE WHITE CANE DAY WITH FLASH MOB DANCE



Our Transition Program teens who are blind or visually impaired made their debut appearance in Downtown Tampa to put on their first-ever public flash mob dance wielding white canes in honor of White Cane Day.

On White Cane Day, October 15th, our Transition Program teens, all of whom are blind or visually impaired, treated observers in downtown Tampa's Curtis Hixon Park to a spirited group dancing performance, demonstrating that there is an effective, fun alternative to the usual White Cane march. The purpose, however, was the same – to promote and celebrate the independence of people who are blind or visually impaired.

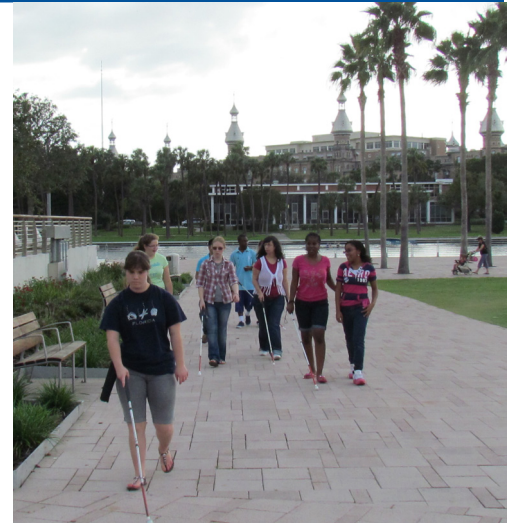
According to Wikipedia, the term “flash mob” was coined in 2003 to describe a group of people who assemble suddenly in a predetermined location to perform, for a brief time, an unusual activity, often for the purposes of entertainment, satire, and artistic expression. The group usually disperses quickly following the act, completing the “flash” descriptor.

Our Transition teachers and students got the flash mob idea from other agencies for the blind that sponsored their own youth-oriented flash mobs which appeared on YouTube. Everyone

involved quickly latched onto the idea, then got together to rehearse for the event. They only had four days to rehearse, but that's all they needed to put together a strong performance.

On the big day, the students, teachers, and several Lighthouse staff and visitors from associated agencies converged on Curtis Hixon Park. To fulfill the flash mob concept, the students were staged in a different location at the park, then they walked in tiered groups to the location near Ashley Drive, arriving right at the 5:00 p.m. appointed starting time. The performance started immediately and was led by two experienced street dancers with everyone dancing to a popular hit song. All of the students had their white canes and danced in formation, moving their canes in unison. It was obvious to the casual observer that the teens were having a great time with spontaneous pirouettes, leaps into the air, and loud cheers at the end.

One of the central messages behind White Cane Day is to educate the public



The student participants making their way through the park to the designated flash mob location with the University of Tampa minarets and riverfront forming quite a scenic backdrop.

on the White Cane Law which states, “Whenever a pedestrian is crossing, or attempting to cross, a public street or highway, guided by a dog guide or carrying in a raised or extended position a cane or walking stick which is white in color or white tipped with red, the driver of every vehicle approaching the intersection or place where the pedestrian is attempting to cross shall bring his or her vehicle to a full stop before arriving at such intersection or place of crossing and, before proceeding, shall take such precautions as may be necessary to avoid injuring such pedestrian. A person who is convicted of a violation of this subsection is guilty of a moving violation punishable as provided in chapter 318.

Completing the flash mob concept, the group members quickly dispersed following their performance. However, that was not the last of it as a video of the performance was posted onto YouTube the next day. Anyone who wishes to view the video may copy and paste or type the phrase “White Cane Awareness Day Flash Mob Tampa Florida” into the search box at www.youtube.com.

GRADUATION AND HOLIDAY PARTIES



Tampa graduates proudly display their hard-earned diplomas.

Our graduations combined with holiday parties took place on November 30th and December 7th in Winter Haven and Tampa respectively. These events highlighted the accomplishments of our graduates who have worked diligently to regain independence that was lost when they became visually impaired. Many of our Independent Living graduates went on to learn adaptive computer skills and others took computer training to improve their prospects for employment. Each of our graduates was named during the presentation of diplomas even if they were unable to attend.

Our 19th annual Winter Haven graduation party was held in the Activity Room of our new building for only the second time ever. Nancy Powers, one of our 2012 graduates entertained the crowd by playing cabaret and holiday music on her trombone.

In Tampa (as with Winter Haven), the graduates and their guests began arriving early to mingle with one another. Former graduates were invited as well and many came. When it was time for the graduation ceremony, the graduates lined up and marched down the aisle to the tune of Pomp and Circumstance. Orientation and Mobility Specialist Rebecca Leng served as Master of Ceremonies for the Winter Haven graduation, while our Assistant Executive Director (formerly Rehabilitation Services



After the graduation ceremony, everyone lined up for the buffet lunch.



Members of the Coleman Orchestra stayed for lunch and mingled with our graduates.

Manager) Sheryl Brown presided over the Tampa graduation. At both events, each of the instructors were called up to present their words of inspiration to the graduates. The diplomas were then given out to the graduates in attendance and later mailed out to those who were not able to attend. Following the presentation of diplomas, graduates and family members were invited to give testimonials about their experiences and share the major differences of where they were before and after their training. Many emotions were shared as most of our current graduates, some family members, 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 along with graduation



The Coleman Middle School orchestra played holiday music for the attendees. This orchestra, under the leadership of Director Edward Thanz, has been entertaining this event for over ten years straight.

cake for dessert. The Coleman Middle School Orchestra – Chamber Ensemble, directed by Edward Thanz, has become a holiday tradition for the Lighthouse's Tampa graduation and holiday event as they have been coming out for more than 10 years. Eddie Chacon, a former Lighthouse client, also provided holiday music by playing his guitar.

For both parties, we wish to thank our staff for their efforts, creativity, and enthusiasm in 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: Jackie Barry, Grace Berg, Olaf Berg, Earl Bessent, Suzanne Ciptak, Felicita Conty Diaz, Ruth Ann Dahlquist, Gilberto Diaz-Gonzalez, Emile Dubay, Carolyn Duke, William Ferron, Carmen Giaccio, Juana Gonzalez, Joseph Graff, George Gragg, Muriel Hageman, Ron Hall, Mary Handley, Elisabeth Hawbaker, Cindy Hedinger, JaHazel Hepler, Joni King, Marie Lenart, Yadira Maldonado, Josue Maqueira, Gloria Mills, Kat Miranda, Boniface Ogueke, Juan Perez, Mayra Rangel, Lavenia Reckley, Sandra Ritner, Delia Rivera, Vicky Robison, Peggy Ruge, Jeanette Rush, Ricardo Sabillon, Donna Soulam, Debra Thompson, Diane

Continued on Page 5

GRADUATION AND HOLIDAY PARTIES

Continued from Page 4



Winter Haven graduates proudly show off their well-earned diplomas.



Time to eat! Graduates, guests, and other attendees line up for the buffet lunch.



Graduate Nancy Powers entertained by playing a mix of cabaret music on her trombone.



The Graduation cake was so well-received that it was completely gone when lunch was over.

Trembone, Rachel Vigil, Jose Viqueira, Willie Washington, and Tom Whitehair.

WINTER HAVEN GRADUATES: Alyce Adamiak, Carl Amato, Chavara Andrews, Sally Antle, Joel Armstrong, John Arnold, Bonnie Atherton, Edna Baake, Helen Bachman, Ramon Baltazar, Dale Barefoot, Henry Bucher, Robert Camp, Hazel Caruthers, Anthony Catalano, David Cline, Marjorie Collins, Rosa Lee Dixon, Ramond Duncan, Soraya Echevarria, Robert Evans, Robert Fick, Delama Fletcher, Dyonne Florance, Jean Fowler, Kathy Gauna,

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LIGHTHOUSE STAFF CONDUCT iPad® TRAINING SEMINAR



This gathering of professionals in the field of blindness included mainly teachers of the visually impaired.

Because the new iPad® tablet computer has set a new standard for accessibility for persons with disabilities including those with visual impairments, professionals in the field of blindness have been clamoring to learn how it can best be utilized by their students. The Lighthouse has readily encouraged all of



This was a large turnout of teachers who were eager to learn the many built-in accessibility features of the new tablet computers.

its assistive technology specialists and rehabilitation teachers to incorporate this new technology into their training curricula. As an early adopter, the Lighthouse is in a unique position to teach other professionals in the field on the application of this new device. Therefore, on December



Lighthouse Rehabilitation Teacher Chelsea Bridges conducted the training and was assisted by Computer Teacher Jennifer Hyland.

6th, Lighthouse instructors Chelsea Bridges and Jennifer Hyland conducted a seminar for Florida public school teachers of the visually impaired. The seminar was well attended and the teachers went away eager to impart their new knowledge of this amazing technology to their students.

DAYS OF CARING CELEBRATED AT BOTH FACILITIES



Our Tampa facility was “adopted” for this year’s Day of Caring by Publix Super Markets, Stores # 399, 511, 582, and 628.



Our Winter Haven facility was adopted by Citizens Bank & Trust in Lake Wales.



The orientation of volunteers included sighted guide training under the blindfold. Volunteers took turns guiding each other.



Even the ice cream was made from scratch using ice cream churns.



Also included in the orientation of the volunteers was having them perform basic kitchen tasks under the blindfold such as pouring liquids with the help of an electronic sensor.



Many current and former clients came to enjoy a free lunch, courtesy of our Day of Caring event.

This year’s United Way Days of Caring which took place October 11th (Tampa) and October 18th (Winter Haven) consisted of traditional cookouts and picnics as special treats for our clients. United Way Suncoast (formerly United Way of Tampa Bay) helped coordinate our Tampa facility’s Day of Caring, and United Way of Central Florida helped coordinate Day of Caring for our Winter Haven facility. Our Tampa facility was “adopted” for this year’s Day of Caring by four local Publix Super Markets stores (numbers 399, 511, 582, and 628) with a total of 26 volunteers participating. Our Winter Haven facility was adopted by Citizens Bank & Trust of Lake Wales with 12 volunteers who brought cookies for dessert. Citizen’s Bank President Greg Littleton and United Way of Central Florida liaison Rich Shapiro also stopped by to lend their

support.

Prior to preparing the picnic at each location, the volunteers were given a hands-on orientation that included a complete tour of each facility, adaptive computer technology demonstrations, a visit to the each facility’s store, and experiences under the blindfold focusing on kitchen activities that included pouring water into cups and on proper sighted guide and white cane techniques. The purpose of the orientation was to give each volunteer a sense of what is involved when a blind or visually impaired person comes to the Lighthouse for services.

The volunteers were then put to work preparing all of the food, then serving it to our clients and their guests. The Lighthouse employees

were there to assist where needed, but the lion’s share of the work was carried out by the volunteers who took great pride in seeing the project through from beginning to completion, even including the clean-up.

The turnout each day was quite good and the weather cooperated on the days of each event, enabling the cookout to take place as planned and for the clients to get here without difficulty. Former and current clients alike were all invited. A number of former clients have been coming every year ever since the picnic format was adopted several years ago. The volunteers all had a great time and enjoyed the picnic as much as the clients did as they got to eat their own cooking. Many of the volunteers expressed a desire to return next year.

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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

March 1

Florida Regional Braille Challenge
- West Region. Contact Sue
Glaser, FIMC-VI, at 813-695-8193
for information.

May 4

25th Annual Beepball Classic
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon.
In honor of this event's 25th
Anniversary, the game will be
played at the Main George
Steinbrenner Field (formerly
Legends Field).

May 27

Memorial Day (closed)

July 4

Independence Day (closed)