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Lighthouse News Update - Maximizing independence and providing employment opportunities for persons who are blind or visually impaired



SUMMER 2015

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WELCOME TO OUR SUMMER CONTRIBUTOR RECOGNITION EDITION

Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind truly appreciates all of our donors. We are devoting a significant portion of this e-newsletter to our contributors and will honor them in our Summer and Winter issues. 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. [Click here to go straight to our Contributor list.](#)

PLEASE JOIN US: UPCOMING EVENTS




Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind
1106 W. Platt Street • Tampa, FL 33606
Agency Mission-To maximize independence and provide employment opportunities for persons who are blind or visually impaired... Since 1940

You are invited to our
Second Annual Dining in the Dark
Fundraising and Vision Awareness Event
A Unique Sensory Awareness Experience



Friday, August 21, 2015
6:30 - 9:30 pm

Location: Florida Aquarium located at 701 Channelside Drive
Tampa, FL 33602

- Cocktail reception beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the Stingray Beach
- Silent auction beginning at 6:30 p.m.
- Dinner in the Coral Reef room from 7:30-9:30 p.m.
- Individual Ticket Purchase \$125.00 (If purchased prior to July 15, they are \$100.00)
- The aquarium will be reserved just for our event and participants will be able to tour the aquarium
- Payment accepted by check, credit card, or online at www.tampalighthouse.org/donate-now



Participants will be able to have their photos taken with our special penguin guests!

Seating is limited to 100 guests. RSVP by Friday, July 31, 2015



Tampa Downtown Lions Club



Hosts Fundraiser to benefit

Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind



HamBINGO Mary's
Monday, July 13, 2015
6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

CHARITY BINGO to benefit Tampa Lighthouse

for the Blind in celebration of its 75 years serving blind and visually impaired persons

“HamBINGO Mary’s is a weekly charity event held in Hamburger Mary’s Dining Room every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday nights. . . Hosted by some of Tampa’s most fabulous drag queens, this is not your typical “church basement bingo!” The show can get a little risqué, so enjoy the drink specials and leave the kids at home.” Bingo starts promptly at 7:30. Reservations required for 6:30 to eat or 7:00 for bingo.

Call (813) 241-6279 to reserve your party’s seats no later than Friday, July 11th! For more info, visit <http://hamburgermarys.com/tampa/bingo/>

Guests are asked to make a \$10 donation to play all night (total of 10 games). You can get additional bingo sheets by making an additional donation. The money collected for the bingo cards goes directly to that night’s charity!

SPONSORED BY THE TAMPA DOWNTOWN LIONS CLUB

Contact:

Lion Andrew Moos, DPG at 813-748-5515 or by email jcmoosman@gmail.com

INDEPENDENT LIVING CLASSES HOST FAMILY DAYS TO DEMONSTRATE SKILLS LEARNED BY STUDENTS



These students in Winter Haven baked a bundt cake to demonstrate kitchen skills they learned to their family members.

In many respects, our Independent Living classes represent the cornerstone of services we offer to help those with visual impairments lead normal lives. Those who gain or regain their independence in day-to-day activities often pursue other

challenges such as getting a job, seeking higher education, operating a computer, or seeking recreational outlets.

Recently, the Independent Living class in Winter Haven celebrated Family Day with a feast. The class made lasagna, salad, garlic bread, and a delicious bundt cake to share with their friends, family and teachers.

Family Day is an important day because it allows the people who attended class to share what they learned at the Lighthouse and how their new skills will make them more independent in their daily lives. Some of the topics in the Independent Living class include: money identification, phone dialing techniques, handwriting guides, adaptive cooking techniques, household cleaning skills, personal management, braille, adjustment to vision loss, as well as orientation and mobility training. Congratulations to everyone in the class!

LIGHTHOUSE STUDENTS AND STAFF REACH OUT TO SERVE THE COMMUNITY



Transition students and teachers from both Tampa and Winter Haven came out to support and participate in Race for Sight.



The Lighthouse's Bill's Boosters team came out to Miles for Moffitt to march, display our signs, and support the fight against cancer.

The Lighthouse is not content just to receive community support - students and employees alike find ways to serve the community outside the Lighthouse walls. It's simply called "giving back" and it is well-ingrained in the Lighthouse culture.

On April 25th, Transition students from both Tampa and Winter Haven came out to participate in the Race for Sight/Roar Thru Ybor 5K and 1-mile run/walk. The students had already participated in projects to raise funds for the event which benefitted the Lions Eye Institute for Transplant and Research. Their race registrations further contributed to the event as many were out there pounding the pavement with other runners and walkers. The Winter Haven students and their teachers traveled to Tampa the day before and held a sleep-over at the Tampa Lighthouse so they could get to the race venue on time the next morning.

On May 9th, several Lighthouse employees, family members, and friends, as members of our Bill's Boosters team, converged upon the University of South Florida campus to participate in the 10th Anniversary Miles for Moffitt in the fight against cancer in the name of one of our recent cancer survivors. Bill couldn't attend as it was his wedding day. Our other recent cancer survivor had given her daughter away at her wedding just a few weeks before. Life goes on!

In following the precept "charity begins at home," coming up this summer are two Lighthouse fundraisers: Charity bingo (HamBINGO Mary's at 1600 E. 7th Ave in Tampa on July 13th from 6:30 - 9:00 p.m.) sponsored by the Tampa Downtown Lions Club, and Dining in the Dark at the Florida Aquarium on August 21st from 6:00 - 10:00 p.m.

SIGHT-IMPAIRED CHILD JUMPS LEAPS & BOUNDS IN THE EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM OF LIGHTHOUSE



Junior proudly displays his diploma for successfully completing the Early Intervention program.

In May 2009, Walter was born with congenital cataracts which were quickly diagnosed when he was just a few days old. The cataracts were successfully removed, but Walter remained severely visually impaired from “aphakia,” or the absence of lens in the eyes that help us focus. Additionally, he had involuntary, bilateral eye movement known as “nystagmus.” So very early in life, he ignored his blurry vision and motion became a primary stimulant for him. If you’ve ever seen a three year old re-enact “Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed” on a real bed, you have met Walter, affectionately known as “Junior.” He is energetic, full of life, and loves to laugh! At three-years old, he was referred to the Lighthouse by his pediatrician to determine if he could benefit from special glasses or visual aids. When he was examined by Dr. Petito, Lighthouse’s Low Vision Specialist, it was determined that Junior could greatly benefit from glasses with special lens. However, his best corrected vision would still leave him legally blind. Subsequently, the Lighthouse’s

Winter Haven Case Manager referred him to their Early Intervention program. Soon thereafter, the Lighthouses' Early Intervention (EI) teacher came to his home to conduct a formal evaluation of his development and learning skills. Junior impressed his new teacher with his climbing and jumping ability at the first home visit! By then, he had become very adept at scaling up his dresser drawers and then plunging down onto his bed! The thick glasses he had been given earlier were nowhere to be found. His EI's first order of business was to find the glasses and get him to wear them so that he would begin taking in more of his surroundings, begin forming those all-important concepts of the world around him, and engage in educational activities that were to be planned for him. It took time for Junior to get used to his glasses with a strong bifocal in the bottom half of the lens and a prescription for distance viewing in the top, but persistence paid off. Eventually, the activities required him to use his vision exclusively which reinforced the need for him to wear them. Before long, he forgot he had them on and he became dependent on them. It would be hard to say if he enjoyed jumping off the bed any less, but at least now he could see where to land! Movement was now more precise; walking, running, and going up and down steps became easier.

The EI's intensive work with Junior didn't start a minute too soon. The standardized tests that she administered revealed that he was 18-24 months behind in his overall development. He also had a significant speech delay, limited life experience, and lack of incidental learning. Being born with cataracts, experiencing surgery at a young age, and not wearing his glasses caused a delay in Junior's typical learning development. Statistics reveal that 85% of what a person learns happens by age five and vision often plays a key role in its success or defeat. However, Junior's personal love of life was in his favor. Once he began wearing his glasses, he developed an interest in the world around him. He enjoyed being able to stack blocks, scribble and see his marks, and look at picture books. Like a dry sponge, he quickly absorbed every new concept, picture, word, and game! He began to enjoy puzzles, books, learning his ABC's, numbers, and playing with cars! After just a few months of service, it was evident that Junior was in fact, a very bright little boy; he just needed to wear his glasses and use his vision to make connections with his world. By the end of the summer, Junior knew all his ABC's and geometric shapes; could count to 100, spell his first name, and identify colors! It was as if a miracle had transformed his world and he was channeling much of that prodigious energy into learning.

The Lighthouse's EI also assisted Junior's mother getting his Individual Education Plan (IEP) established and enrolling him in preschool. Vision services continued to be provided by the Lighthouse at his preschool. His EI worked with his school teacher, introducing special equipment and strategies that assist the visually impaired. Teaching pre-reading and math concepts on a lightbox with manipulatives, and exploring various activities to increase his visual fine motor strength were done. He especially enjoyed making large 8" letters in shaving crème and using a writing application on the iPad that provided high contrast. Practicing playing in new environments, like the outdoor playground, was done to help him overcome his fears of the unknown. By the end of the year, Junior was recognizing sight words and memorizing songs! Opportunities for experiencing the world were then provided in a whole summer of events, scheduled by the Lighthouse that included social interaction as he was teamed up with a very fluent, visually impaired peer. Some of his favorite experiences that summer were visiting the Florida Aquarium and feeding ducks at the pond. Another year of learning propelled him even further as he gained skills in every area.

Junior's recent post-Oregon assessment revealed just how far he has come. He entered our Blind Babies program with 229 skills and graduated with 622 skills! He also tested successfully on the Dolch Sight Word test through third grade and is

fluently reading beginning second grade chapter books! He has beat all the odds and is more than sufficiently prepared for kindergarten this fall.

Junior is a prime example of why the Lighthouse's Blind Babies Program is so important. It is doubtful that he would have ever overcome his developmental delays without the interventions he received from the Lighthouse. His Mom says about the program, "I love the Lighthouse; they have done so much for him." And "Junior loves her! (his El) She has helped a lot." The Lighthouse's two Early Intervention Specialists serve 48 blind and visually impaired children each year in Polk and Hardee counties. They strive to provide intervention services that will positively impact a child and his or her family in such a way that it promotes the best quality of life imagined, from the start, for the rest of their lives. "Off to a jumping start" has a whole new meaning now that Junior is prepared to move ahead. Without question, there are no more monkeys bumping their heads, even if they are still jumping!

CONTRIBUTORS

The names listed below include those whose contributions were received between January 1, 2015 and June 30, 2015. 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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City of Winter Haven Community Development Block Grant

Sponsored by DOE/Division of Blind Services and the State of Florida

Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners

Polk County Community Development Block Grant

United Way of Central Florida

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