

Lighthouse Program Update

Lighthouse provides **free** vision rehabilitation services to persons with vision impairments. In this edition of LVIB IN TOUCH, we are featuring our children and teen summer programs, our job readiness program and our support groups. Future editions will include segments on Lighthouse's other programs such as Independent Living and Assistive Technology. For a complete list of services, please refer to the **About Us** section on page 8 or visit our website.

Kids Summer Camp

The week before school started, the Pasco Lighthouse was taken over by children ages 5-13 who were attending a week long summer camp. Camp attendees were busy making new friends, participating in team-building activities, cooking, and making crafts.

Each day, students practiced writing their signatures by signing in, and made their own lunch, which could be a PB&J sandwich, mac n'cheese, or a hot dog. Youth also participated in a multitude of projects such as making tie dyed t-shirts and rain

sticks. Students built a tent inside our facility and learned all about camping safety from a great guest speaker, Roger Perez, who has extensive experience in teaching children about outdoor activities.

On the last day, all students participated in a scavenger hunt where they had to decode Braille. The students did a great job decoding the Braille and finding the items. All the students had a blast and took home new skills, memories and great new friendships! ■



Kids at camp developing Braille skills

Teen Summer Transition Program

Six teens with visual impairments participated in the LVIB Summer Transition Program (STP). The goal of this program is to help teens with visual impairments gain the skills that will empower them to transition into adulthood, and live independent and productive lives. To reach this goal, students in the STP are provided with instruction in a multitude of skills that include but are not limited to job skills, career skills, problem solving skills, social skills, daily living skills, independent living skills, and skills in the use of adaptive devices and assistive technology.

This summer, students participated in a real life work experience at the SPCA Suncoast. It was the perfect setting for students to learn real life daily living skills along with office skills. Students participated in many of the tasks it takes to make the SPCA Suncoast run—everything from cleaning bathrooms to filing

papers. The director of the SPCA Suncoast, Gail Armstrong, has a background in special education and held high expectations of our students.



Some of our teens creating a donation box for the SPCA Suncoast

Gail had the following to say about the impression the STP left on her and the SPCA Suncoast:

"The teens with the Lighthouse for the Blind's Transition Program are

an amazing group of hard workers. Toward the end of the program, I was actually worried I wouldn't have enough work to keep them busy! I had thought they would never get through all the filing we had, as it went back several years. They not only got through that—they helped with day to day operations by cleaning and doing laundry (there's ALWAYS laundry). They also kept our Animeals room organized, made frozen Kongs for the dogs, helped set up a new dog room by moving LOTS of DVDs and then they pet our kittens, cats and dogs during lunch breaks.

The other day a woman called us and asked for the medical records for her cat adopted in 2003. This was before the records were on the computer so we needed to go look up the paper copies. Before the Lighthouse group came, this would

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Job Readiness

Job Readiness is Lighthouse's newest program. The Job Readiness Program is a group and individual preparatory experience for referred DBS clients who are either in need of expanding their concepts of possible vocational goals and opportunities, or enhancement of their employment seeking and stability skills. Following is an overview of the program.

Individual clients are referred to LVIB and interviewed by the Job Readiness Specialist, a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, for their individual needs and then they are

scheduled for group, individual, or combined job readiness sessions. Topics covered during the program include: personal communications, time management, stress management, resume preparation, career exploration, job seeking skills, and employment stability techniques.

Guest speakers present on topics such as Self-Employment, Self-Advocacy, Dress for Success, Social Security Work Incentives, and Vocational Training Programs. Each client is provided with an opportunity to job-shadow and/or complete a work experience.

The successful client exits the program with heightened self-awareness, enhanced independence, and increased confidence in their ability to find work and grow within a career. The Job Readiness Program serves as a comprehensive self-assessment for clients preparing to return to work.

As stated above, Job Readiness is available to assist DBS-referred individuals. It is also available to assist employers, recruiters, counselors and people who have recently experienced a vision loss and wish to maintain their current employment status. ■

Support Groups

Many individuals feel isolated and uncertain when they lose significant amounts of vision. Lighthouse provides support groups to help people cope with these negative effects. Group members help each other to realize that they can still live independent and active lives regardless of how much vision they lose.

Even if you're a very private person, interacting with other individuals who have experienced vision loss can be extremely therapeutic. It's important to keep in mind, however, that each person is an individual and will react to, and cope with, their own vision loss in highly specific and personal ways.

Also, people with longstanding vision loss may or may not experience the same challenges and day-to-day difficulties as people with more recent vision loss.

Nevertheless, meeting other people who have lost vision as adults can help you—and them—feel less alone. Support groups

also provide an opportunity to share your experiences in adapting and managing everyday tasks.

If you feel this type of support group would benefit you, feel free to join us. The following groups will take place at the times and dates listed below.

- **The West Pasco Support Group** is held on the second Thursday of each month, from 2:00-3:00 at the Lighthouse in Port Richey.
- **The Hernando Support Group** is held on the second Tuesday of each month, from 1:00-2:30 at the Lighthouse in Brooksville.
- **The Caregiver Support Group** for family members of people with vision loss is held on the second Tuesday of each month, from 10:00-11:15 at the Lighthouse in Brooksville.

We are beginning a new support group for parents of children who are visually impaired, called the **PROS Network**. PROS stands for Parents Reaching Out – to provide or receive Support with other families who have children who are

visually impaired. The first meeting will take place on September 25th at the Brooksville office. It will be held at the same time as the Fall festival. Kids will be able to participate in various activities while their parents attend the support group. Please see **Upcoming Events** on page 7 or visit our website for more details.

Support groups are one of the services provided by our social worker. Please visit our website for more information on Lighthouse's Social Work Services. ■



Support group discussion guided by our Social Worker

Client Profiles: Living and Learning with Low Vision

Debbie on Low Vision, Orientation & Mobility and Independent Living

Debbie has Retinitis Pigmentosa, a genetic condition that has narrowed her field of vision and significantly reduced her visual acuity. Debbie is able to see some color and some shape, but she's unable to see faces or read print unaided. She can't see anything in the dark and has problems traveling in unfamiliar places. Debbie is also hard of hearing.

Debbie's vision noticeably deteriorated in 1999. Before her vision loss, she was a hairdresser, then a cashier. Now she is a homemaker and cares for her grandchildren after school. She gets them off the bus outside her home and watches over them until their parents arrive. Debbie's neighborhood is very rural so getting to the bus is problematic. There are no sidewalks or street lights and the roads are unpaved and littered with holes.

Debbie started using Orientation and Mobility (O&M) services at Lighthouse in March 2010. She first learned about the Lighthouse from the Zephyrhills Lions Club. She was, and still is, very interested in getting a guide dog but she needs to develop her O&M skills before she can begin. O&M training teaches people how to travel safely with low or no vision, in various environments. Debbie continues to take O&M training, is working on street crossings, and soon will learn to travel in unfamiliar areas.

Debbie remarked that her Lighthouse training has really helped when she goes to the grocery store.

After getting a ride to the store, she exits the car. With her white cane, she moves along the car until she makes it to the roadway. Then she follows the edge of parked cars, in the direction of the store. This method of finding an intersecting walkway (driveway, sidewalk, etc.) is called "shorelining," but she doesn't only focus on that. As she travels, she listens for cars and pedestrians and she feels for texture changes beneath her feet.



Debbie uses her white cane to walk safely on the road

Debbie also took Independent Living Classes at Lighthouse. In a group of 6, she learned many things, including how to pour liquids safely, use large print checks, identify paper money, mark settings on appliances, and thread a needle. She also attended a Lighthouse Support Group. She stated that she really appreciated the opportunity to socialize with others experiencing vision loss and to talk about vision

loss with people who are visually impaired.

Debbie has acquired a few things in her home that make her life a little easier, too. In the living room, there's a special phone that amplifies the voice of the caller and has large print numbers on large tactile buttons. In her kitchen, there is a magnifying glass on the table, a large print alarm clock on the counter, and in the drawer, color-contrast measuring cups. Bright red "high" markings adorn her stove, microwave and washer/dryer dials. A video magnification machine (CCTV) sits on a table in the second bedroom. The strong magnification and bright light help Debbie with reading her mail. She also showed me her digital book reader from the Bureau of Talking Books, which provides her with the opportunity to read audibly at no cost. She has had her book reader for a year and she really loves using it.

One day, Debbie would like to learn how to use a computer independently. She plans to use Lighthouse Assistive Technology Services for this, and also plans to attend more support group meetings and learn to read Braille. Debbie will go on to get her guide dog too. Back when Debbie lost her sight in 1999, she became very angry because she lost her independence. She says Lighthouse has helped with adjusting to her vision loss and she's feeling less angry. She wishes she came to the Lighthouse much sooner but everything's ok. She feels her independence coming back. ■



Aidan and Early Intervention

Meet Aidan, who is one of the children in our early intervention program for kids, ages birth to five. Aidan entered the world a few days before Christmas in 2008. He was born 3 months earlier than expected, weighing just a little over 2 pounds. He was so tiny that he fit in the palm of his dad's hand.

Because Aidan was so premature, he faced a long list of health concerns and 3 months in the hospital. Babies born prematurely can develop an eye condition known as retinopathy of prematurity. Because they are born before the blood vessels in the retina have completed their growth, the blood vessels continue to grow after birth and may develop irregularly or form scar tissue inside the eye. Before Aidan left the hospital, he had already had laser surgery on his eyes.

As soon as Aidan was settled at home, his family connected with the Lighthouse. So, at just about the time he should have been born, Aidan got started with Little Lighthouse Early Intervention Services. After months in a hospital, Aidan was pretty skeptical of anyone who wasn't mom or dad. But after he found

that we had only toys in our bag, and no needles, he decided to take a peek. One of the first things he responded to visually was a simple black and white drawing of a smiling face that we call Harry. Aidan became an instant fan of Harry.



Aidan uses his hands to explore things he cannot see

One of the goals of the early intervention program is to help children with visual impairments learn to integrate all their senses to

reach those same developmental milestones that all children pass through at their own pace. So, although Aidan's vision may not always be reliable, he is an excellent listener. While some babies would locate mom just by scanning the room, Aidan would listen first to know where to direct his attention, and then look. Toys with audible components like balls with bells inside, helped to build on that skill. Playing with toys with interesting textures like bumpy, squishy, crinkly, smooth and rough helped to encourage Aidan to use his hands to give information that his eyes might have missed. That's a very important life skill for people with visual impairments.

Today, Aidan is a bright, inquisitive, seriously busy toddler. He is walking everywhere and into everything. One of his favorite toys is a toy lawnmower that he can push himself and which makes LOUD sounds. Aidan also loves his picture books. He has piles of them in a basket where he can reach them whenever he wants. He is a happy guy when he can pull them out one-by-one, turn the pages and point to fish or ducks or, of course, smiling faces. ■

Teen STP Program Update

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have been a hit-or-miss project taking a long time with possibly no results. Instead, within 5 minutes we had the file. What a win for us!!! The group did a lot of valuable work for us, but the best part was meeting and spending time with them. We already miss them."

Not only did this experience benefit the teens, it benefited a local non-profit and raised community awareness about visual disabilities.

The teens also created a donation box for the SPCA Suncoast which is in our front lobby. Check out our Facebook for a list of items the SPCA Suncoast needs.

In addition to work experience, students went on field trips with other Transition groups from other agencies which further increased their peer network. Often a student who is visually impaired or blind is the only one in their school, which may leave the student feeling isolated. At the LVIB, students have the opportunity to be around other

students who face similar challenges and also be around positive visually impaired role models.

The STP is only a five-week program but the skills learned are beneficial for a lifetime. Throughout the school year, the LVIB also provides transition services that include instruction to reinforce skills learned in the summer. Socialization activities are provided as well. ■

People Who are Making a Difference

Laurel Brown, Lighthouse Program Manager and Social Worker



Laurel Brown, Independent Living Program Manager, has been with the Lighthouse for 18 months. She has a bachelor's in Social Work from the University of Wyoming and a master's in Social Work from Florida State University. Previously, Laurel served

as a counselor in Daytona Beach at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired. She also has worked with the Wyoming Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Laurel has been blind since birth, but she has led a very normal life. Laurel grew up on a ranch in Douglas, Wyoming, where she worked alongside her family all year long. Her responsibilities included feeding bum lambs and calves, branding lambs, gathering and moving livestock and helping with yard and house work.

As Lighthouse's program manager, Laurel is responsible for case

management, providing information and referrals, and making community presentations to increase awareness about blindness and Lighthouse services. She also provides social work services which include individual and group adjustment to blindness counseling. Laurel's positive attitude and lifelong determination have made her a role model and an advocate for the abilities of persons with visual impairments. Sylvia Perez, Executive Director, stated that Laurel is a vital part of the Lighthouse team and is admired and well respected by her colleagues. ■

Dr. John Mann, Lighthouse's New Board President



Dr. John Mann, President of the Lighthouse Board of Directors, is the Director of Communications, Government Relations and Leadership Development for the District School Board of Pasco County. He has served as a board member at his local church for the last twenty years. He was past chairman of the West Pasco Chamber of Commerce, and was named "Citizen

of the Year." He has served as a chair or co-chair of several committees.

Dr. Mann began serving as Lighthouse's President in June 2010. He has been on the board for four years and has held various positions such as Vice-President and Secretary. Dr. Mann first became interested in the Lighthouse when he learned of its programs that help babies and children who are visually impaired to meet their developmental milestones. He was also interested in the programs provided to teens and adults. Recently, Dr. Mann attended the STP graduation dinner and enjoyed a meal with the teens and their parents. The teens demonstrated

their newly acquired abilities by preparing a terrific meal and they taught the group about visual impairment using simulator glasses.

Upon accepting his current position, Dr. Mann stated that he feels honored to serve as the President of the Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind, one of the finest local nonprofits with an amazing mission to provide persons who are visually impaired with the skills needed to achieve their maximum independence. He stated that "the growth and rejuvenation of the organization is a success story from which communities in Pasco, Hernando and Citrus counties benefit." ■

Volunteers Extraordinaire - Painters and Grounds Crew Recognized



This summer we were fortunate to have painting parties at both LVIB facilities. **Christian Church in the Wildwood** organized over 30 volunteers to paint our Brooksville office. **Progress Energy Florida** organized over 20 volunteers to paint our Port Richey office. Both groups came out and painted all day. Our clients have noticed how much brighter and cleaner our agency is. Thank you to both groups for all your hard work!



We were also fortunate to have the **Kiwanis Club of Spring Hill** come out to work on the Brooksville playground. The Kiwanis purchased and installed the accessible playground in 2001, and they return periodically to maintain it. Thank you to the Kiwanis for their years of support and for all their hard work. The playground looks great, and the kids are having a great time playing on it. ■



Donors' Corner

In this edition of LVIB IN TOUCH, we are highlighting our **Friends of Lighthouse Annual Giving Program**. Information about other ways you can help, such as making a one-time donation, ordering "A State of Vision" specialty Florida license plate, becoming a volunteer, and becoming a newsletter sponsor, is available on our website.

Friends of Lighthouse Annual Giving Program

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The Friends of Lighthouse Annual Giving Program helps support services for people with visual impairments. Please join this program by donating \$50 or more, and by committing to making an annual donation totaling at least \$50. By signing up to make annual donations, you will be recognized as a Friend of the Lighthouse in the following ways.

- When you join, you will receive a complimentary Friendship lapel pin.
- With your permission, we will recognize you in our newsletter and on our website.

- Friends receive enews updates monthly, as well as LVIB IN TOUCH (our quarterly newsletter), and invitations to special events.
- Get your friends to join Friends of Lighthouse and you receive increased recognition for being a 'Good Friend'.
- Reach over \$1,000 in donations and your name will be commemorated on a plaque displayed at Lighthouse.

Three Ways to Become a Friends of Lighthouse Member

1. Visit our website and download the Friends of Lighthouse enrollment form. Fill in the form, print it and send it by mail to one of our locations, along with your first donation.

2. Click on the "Donate" button on our website and follow the instructions to join.
3. Use the enrollment form on the back of the Friends of Lighthouse printed brochure.

Please Note

- If you send in a check, please make it payable to 'Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind, Inc.' and indicate that your donation is for the 'Friends of Lighthouse Program'.
- You can choose to give annually, quarterly or monthly if you prefer.
- You can discontinue your participation in the program at any time.

If you are already a Friends of Lighthouse donor, thank you for your continued support of this program. ■

Upcoming Events

PROS Network Picnic

Saturday, September 25, 2010

10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Lighthouse's Brooksville office
6492 California Street
Brooksville, FL 34609

- Guided discussion and awareness activities for parents of visually impaired children, supervised games for teens and children, and a picnic-style lunch
- FREE to youth of all ages who are visually impaired and their parents
- **RSVP by Friday September 17** by calling Darlene at 727-815-0303

Low Vision Awareness Day

Tuesday, October 5, 2010

8:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Seventh Day Adventist Church
7333 Dairy Road
Zephyrhills, FL 33540

- Presentations by guest speakers including **Dr. Larry Perich of the Perich Eye Center**, low vision displays, vendor tables, morning beverages.
- FREE to persons with vision loss, their families and friends, and interested organizations
- **RSVP before October 5** by calling 727-815-0303 or emailing events@lvib.org
- **You can also register at the door**

White Cane Awareness Day

Friday, October 15, 2010

9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Delta Woods Park
3400 Deltona Blvd.
Spring Hill, FL 34606

- A walk in the park, supervised games, simulation with blindfold, trivia, and a picnic-style lunch—all to celebrate National White Cane Awareness
- FREE to the public
- **RSVP before October 15** by calling 352-754-1132 or emailing events@lvib.org

For information on Lighthouse events, please visit our website at www.lvib.org. All events are rain or shine.



About Us

The mission of the Lighthouse is to provide persons who are visually impaired with the skills needed to achieve their maximum independence. We provide **free**, individualized rehabilitation services to persons who are visually impaired and their families. We are designated by the Division of Blind Services as the only community resource provider of vision rehabilitation in Pasco, Hernando and Citrus Counties.

Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)3 charity, registration number CH662. A copy of the Lighthouse's official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Florida Division of Consumer Services by calling toll-free 1-800-435-7352. Official registration can also be viewed online. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the state.

The Lighthouse is funded in part by the Department of Education, Division of Blind Services, by the United Way of Pasco and by Pasco County Commissioners. We also depend on fundraising and donations from clubs, businesses and private citizens in order to meet the need for services.

Lighthouse Services and Training:

Services are provided one-on-one or in a small group format. Classes are held in our offices located in Port Richey and Brooksville. We also provide classes in the community, in cities such as Zephyrhills, Dade City and Lecanto. Home-based training is available to many individuals. Volunteers are available to drive clients as required. Our programs include:

- Adults & Seniors: Independent Living Skills, Safe Travel, Braille Literacy, Assistive Technology, Accessible Computer Programs, Job Readiness, Individual Counseling and Support Groups
- Babies: Little Lighthouse Early Intervention
- Children: Educational Activities
- Teens: School to Work Transition

Persons in need of our services can contact the Lighthouse directly. Please plan a visit to the Lighthouse and determine for yourself if our services are right for you. We also welcome referrals from family members, friends, doctors, and other professionals. To make a referral or to learn about eligibility requirements, call us or visit our website. For your convenience, a referral form can be downloaded from www.lvib.org/programs.

Contact the Lighthouse:

Pasco

8610 Galen Wilson Blvd.
Port Richey, FL 34668
727-815-0303
Fax 727-815-0203

Hernando

6492 California Street
Brooksville, FL 34609
352-754-1132
Fax 352-754-5118

Citrus

1-866-962-5254

Toll Free

1-866-962-5254

General Mail Box

lighthouse@lvib.org

Website, Facebook, Blog and Twitter:

Visit us on the web

www.lvib.org

Become a Facebook fan

Search for 'Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind; Pasco, Hernando and Citrus'

Read our blog and sign up for blog updates

www.lvib.org/lighthouse-blog

Follow us on Twitter

twitter.com/LighthouseVIB

About LVIB IN TOUCH

LVIB IN TOUCH is a free quarterly newsletter produced and distributed by Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind.

- Thank you to **Spring Hill Printing Plus, Inc.** for sponsoring this edition of LVIB IN TOUCH. They did a great job printing and assembling our printed newsletter, and their donation is very much appreciated.



Please help us raise awareness about services, reach more persons with visual impairments, and gain support:

- Forward this newsletter to a friend.
- If you are not on our mailing list, contact us to subscribe.
- If you change your address, provide us with the update.
- Please subscribe to our email newsletter at www.lvib.org to save paper and postage costs.
- If you have questions or comments about this newsletter, please contact us at newsletter@lvib.org or call the LVIB in your area. We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for reading LVIB IN TOUCH. ■