



## Giving For A Vision



### 27th Annual Chasco Coronation Ball — An Evening of Elegance

The **27th Annual Chasco Coronation Ball** will be held on March 23, 2012 at 6:00 pm at Spartan Manor in New Port Richey. The Coronation Ball is an evening of elegance which is highlighted by the crowning of this year's King Pithla and Queen Chasco. The 2011 King Pithla, Chuck Grey and Queen Chasco, Judith Koutsos will be on hand to crown the 2012 King and Queen. The Coronation Ball will also feature an elegant dinner along with dancing, silent auctions and entertainment. Reservations for this event are being accepted; and tickets are \$100.00 per person. The proceeds from the event assist the Lighthouse in continuing the organization's mission. For more information on the Chasco Coronation Ball, please contact Tina Shelton at (727) 439-0516 or [tinashelton@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:tinashelton@tampabay.rr.com).



*The 2011 King & Queen, Chuck Grey & Judith Koutsos (center) receiving their award from their 2010 predecessors, Bonnie Howard & Dr. Rao Musunuru.*

### 2011 White Cane Awareness Day

On Saturday, October 15, the Lighthouse hosted a National White Cane Safety Day event which was attended by almost 100 visually impaired and blind persons and their friends and family members. Several volunteers also attended including sorority sisters from Theta Phi Alpha at Saint Leo University. Thank you to all who came out and supported the event. Also, thank you to Vanda Pharmaceuticals and Publix for their sponsorship. Vanda is conducting a sleep study for those who are completely blind and experience sleep deprivation. For information on the study, please contact Vanda at 1-888-389-7033, [info@non24registry.com](mailto:info@non24registry.com), or go to [www.non24registry.com](http://www.non24registry.com). ■



## Year In Review

In 2011, the Lighthouse served over 800 people, not including individuals in need of information or referrals. Of this number, 241 persons with vision impairments and blindness were provided with extensive vision rehabilitation programs; and 46 family members and professionals were provided with counseling and collaboration with the objective of supporting persons with vision loss. The breakdown is as follows:

- 30 blind babies and children received training to help them get a good start that ensures they can have a normal childhood and can look forward to a higher quality of life.
- 14 teens participated in the School to Work Transition Program which prepares teens for independent living, higher education, and employment.
- The Independent Living Program and Vocational Rehabilitation Program combined provided training to 195 persons—giving many adults a chance to improve their employment situation, and many seniors the ability to stay in their own homes independently and safely.
- A record number of vocational rehabilitation clients were served, demonstrating the need for job placement and employment center initiatives.
- We assisted over 500 people with obtaining Low Vision devices that enabled them to live more independently.
- In 2012, we anticipate the demand for services will increase by 16%.



*Services are provided to persons with vision impairments of all ages, thanks to the generosity of our donors.*

### Employment Initiatives - Highlights

In 2011, the Lighthouse began several employment initiatives (EI) in an effort to create employment for persons with vision loss. Accomplishments include:

- Our WebStore opened in January 2011, employing one person who is visually impaired. Over 800 donated books, movies & CD's can be purchased at <http://amzn.to/lvibstore>.
- An EI staff member completed an administrative project for the Rap River Run, and has been asked to take on greater responsibility for the next race.
- We have been working diligently to develop an assembly/manufacturing center which will employ individuals who are visually impaired and blind starting in 2012.

### Prevalence of Blindness and Visual Impairment: Pasco, Hernando & Citrus\*

| County       | Age 0–11   | Age 12–54    | Age 55+       | Total         |
|--------------|------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Citrus       | 63         | 1,000        | 6,843         | 7,906         |
| Hernando     | 85         | 1,270        | 7,616         | 8,971         |
| Pasco        | 275        | 3,999        | 18,285        | 22,559        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>423</b> | <b>6,269</b> | <b>32,744</b> | <b>39,436</b> |

\*Cavanaugh, B., Crudden, A., Giesen, J., McDonnall, M., Sansing, W. (2008). *Statewide assessment of unmet rehabilitation needs of Florida citizens who are blind or visually impaired*. Mississippi State University, Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision. ■

## Client Profiles

### Learning To See: A Child's Journey

The first few years of a child's life are filled with wonder and excitement. Each moment brings opportunities for learning. A child's potential is shaped by their experiences, as well as their personality, their environment, and the support of parents and caregivers. For a visually impaired or blind child, early intervention is essential to help them develop their full potential. A child who is visually impaired must develop visual abilities, compensation skills and learn to cope with their disability from an early age.

Lily is a 15-month-old little girl with a visual impairment. She has bilateral Microphthalmia (small eyes), Coloboma (hole in the structure of the eye), and Nystagmus (involuntary movement of the eye). Since Lily's birth, her parents, Jennifer and Peter, have worked diligently to learn about their child's condition and to find ways to help their child adapt to vision loss. Jennifer and Peter admit it has been a struggle. Lily's combination of visual defects is quite rare, therefore very little is known. They would like to develop an understanding of genetics, and an understanding of what their child can see—it's difficult to determine what an infant sees because of limited communication.

Before coming to the Lighthouse, Lily had been seen by numerous professionals. While a diagnosis had been made, there was no plan in place to support Lily's development. One day Jennifer realized her child had some vision; Lily tracked her cell phone because of the display. Jennifer and Peter were ecstatic to learn that their child could see; however, it was difficult to persuade most people to believe.

Lily's story with the Lighthouse began when she was 5 months old. After a referral to the Lighthouse by Dr. Derek Hess, Jennifer and Peter said they were thrilled to learn about free, specialized vision rehabilitation services designed to support persons with vision impairment at any age—and all provided by experienced, educated and caring professionals. They were further intrigued and amazed to learn that many Lighthouse services are provided by successful professionals who are visually impaired. Our program manager, for example, has been blind since birth. Jennifer and Peter appreciated the fact that our staff could teach from personal experience.

We began by providing information and support to Lily's parents, specifically emphasizing the importance of treating Lily like a regular child. So much of what a person knows is based on everyday interactions and incidental learning. However for a child with a visual impairment, incidental learning, which is learning through observation, is problematic. Lily's parents have learned to give their child every experience they can, and to bring the world to her, so Lily can touch it and see it with her hands.



*It is said that 80 to 90% of what is learned is from visual information, but what if you are a person who cannot see?*



*Lily is developing more confidence and personality. Thanks to supportive and determined parents, her own determination and the Lighthouse team, Lily is and will continue to be a success.*

The Lighthouse created an individualized training program for Lily. She received a functional assessment of her physical, cognitive and visual abilities in order to identify learning goals. Lily began to receive weekly visits from Becky, our Early Intervention Teacher, who also worked with the parents so they were able to support skill development 24 hours a day.

Lily began to develop her visual capabilities while making her developmental milestones. While most children see a whole object first, and then explore the little parts, children like Lily need to construct a whole image from the parts they can see or feel at one time. As a result, Lily became very interested in physical details which has helped her to develop other skills and senses.

Lily is developing tactile sensitivity, recognition of objects and differentiation of sizes and shapes. Lily used to reach out and feel for edges in order to find objects but now she is using her eyes and her sense of smell. Recently, Lily started to walk and she has also started to talk. Anyone who sees Lily is instantly captivated by her grin, her wonderful giggly babble, and her childish but steady pace. She also loves holding her books and behaving as though she can read. The Lighthouse will work with Lily on developing literacy, using large print and braille materials. We will continue to work with Lily to ensure she develops many other abilities including safe movement skills.

From the start, Jennifer and Peter were worried about Lily's future. They were concerned that their daughter would be held back in some way because of her disability. It is a relief that they have found much needed services and support. The Lighthouse staff says it is wonderful to see Lily grow and develop more confidence and personality. All of the critical components are coming together to make Lily a success—supportive and encouraging parents, a child with determination, and a Lighthouse team that believes all can learn, with or without sight.

The Lighthouse appreciates the opportunity to work with Lily and other children like her. Our hard work, and that of their parents, is making a difference for children who are visually impaired and blind. The State of Florida provides about 30% of the funding needed to serve all our babies and children. Donations are critical to ensuring that all blind babies have the opportunity to succeed. We hope other children will be able to make the same journey. ■

## Donna's Big Adventure

Donna is an adventurous, determined woman who is meeting a significant challenge. Although she has had Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) from birth, she has not let it stop her from leading a productive life. Recently, Donna's vision loss became more pronounced. This should have been a huge detriment, but Donna rose to the challenge and is now on what she calls a big adventure.

Donna was diagnosed with RP at the age of 12. RP is a genetic eye disease that progressively leads to blindness. The tell tale sign for Donna was having poor night vision. She would bump into things when there was insufficient light. Despite the challenges, Donna was a typical teenager, who was active, athletic, and played fast pitch. Donna entered the workforce after graduating high school in New Jersey and proved to be an exemplary employee. She worked hard, and with each position, she became more skilled and was given more responsibility.

At the age of 23, Donna relocated to Citrus County, Florida. She kept working and continued, for a short time, to play softball. Her athleticism gave her the motivation she needed to overcome the challenges she faced. Donna was also able to 'pass' as a sighted person.

The Lighthouse provided services to Donna's brother 18 years ago. In September of 2010, Donna contacted the Lighthouse, wanting to volunteer. Then, after speaking with staff, she decided to become a student in training. Donna was excited to finally meet others who were visually impaired. She knew it was time to come to terms with her vision loss and get some help.

Donna dove into an intensive training program which covered Independent Living, Safe Travel/ White Cane, Assistive Technology and Braille. Vision Rehabilitation teachers taught a variety of techniques and strategies to help Donna most successfully adapt to her vision loss and develop independence. According to Patricia Lopez, a Lighthouse Vision Rehabilitation instructor, Donna was an excellent student. "Donna told me she was tired of 'passing' and she took all of that energy and redirected it into her training".

Now equipped with instruction, guidance, tools and resources, Donna can continue living her adventure, on her own terms and in her own way. In the past, she experienced anger and sadness, but now she is coping much better and is actively engaged in Donna's Big Adventure. Donna has learned to do things around her home for herself, and she continues with several hobbies (which include expanding her Wizard of Oz collection) and her regular pilgrimage—she loves to explore the world on her own, and with her friends and family. ■



*Life presents many challenges but none so potentially devastating as eye disease that leads to blindness.*

Donna's Big Adventure is a summarized version of this story.  
The full story can be read online at <http://lvib.org/profiles>.

# Donors - December 2010 to December 2011

Thank you to everyone who supports our mission. Every effort has been made to recognize as many people as possible. If your name should be added to this list, please contact [newsletter@lvib.org](mailto:newsletter@lvib.org). Also, a huge thank you to our 2011 ball goers—you came out in record numbers and made our fundraising ball a huge success!

## Friends of the Lighthouse

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# About Us



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**Board and staff directory**  
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**Visit us on the web**  
[www.lvib.org](http://www.lvib.org)

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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 vision rehabilitation services to persons who are visually impaired and their families. We are designated by the Florida Division of Blind Services as the only community resource provider of vision rehabilitation in Pasco, Hernando and Citrus Counties.

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The Lighthouse is funded in part by the Department of Education, Division of Blind Services, by the United Way of Pasco and Hernando Counties, 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.

## The Lighthouse Legacy Society

Only 8% of American households include nonprofits in their estate plans. Imagine the impact it would have on our community if everyone made a bequest to their favorite nonprofit! The Lighthouse is asking you to consider making a bequest that will have a lasting effect on persons who are visually impaired and blind. Following is generalized codicil for your use. Please provide a signed copy to the Lighthouse in order to assist with the execution of your final wishes.

**"I devise and bequeath to Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind, Inc., a nonprofit agency registered in the State of Florida, the sum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (or otherwise describe the gift; often a percentage of the estate is designated) to be used in the furtherance of its mission and general purposes."**

To learn about The Lighthouse Legacy Society, please visit <http://lvib.org/help/donate/legacy>. In order to create a valid last will and testament, a donor should always obtain the assistance of an attorney.

## About LVIB IN TOUCH

LVIB IN TOUCH is a free quarterly newsletter produced and distributed by the Lighthouse.

- Thank you to ABCO Graphics & Printing, Inc. for sponsoring this edition of LVIB IN TOUCH. ABCO always does a great job printing and assembling our newsletter, and their donation is very much appreciated.
- Contributors to this issue of LVIB IN TOUCH include Becky Barber, Caryl Melancon, Meredith McInnes, Patricia Porter, & Sylvia Stinson-Perez.



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

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