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LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED AND BLIND'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Agency Update From The Executive Director

2012 has been a very exciting time so far at the Lighthouse—and much more is coming—including the Grand Opening of a new program and facility for the Lighthouse on April 27! I want to send out a special thanks **to all who support the Lighthouse**. As a not-for-profit organization, we rely on volunteers and donations to help us reach our mission. We are always looking for volunteers and appreciate donations. See inside for ways you can help us help individuals with vision loss to achieve their maximum independence and potential.

On March 23, 2012, we held our **27th Annual Chasco Coronation Ball**. We were so fortunate to have one of our wonderful families come and share their story of having a blind baby—and I think all present will agree that baby Lily was a little princess. We also crowned our new king and queen. Congratulations to the 2012 King Pithla Bob Memoli and Queen Chasco Cindy Ewald. The Coronation Ball is the kickoff event for the Chasco Fiesta in West Pasco. It recognizes the tremendous contributions of the nominees who give their time, talent and treasures to make Pasco a great place to live. In addition, the Coronation Ball is the major fundraiser for the Lighthouse, raising funds to support our Blind Babies Early Intervention Program. Early estimates indicate that \$50,000 was raised. Thank you to our sponsors, nominees and all who attended. A very special thanks to the 2012 Ball Planning Committee chaired by Tina Shelton.



Lily holds a beeping egg at our Annual Easter Egg Hunt for babies and children with vision impairments.

Did you know that persons who are blind experience an over 70% unemployment rate? The Lighthouse Board of Directors and staff have decided it is time to do something about this in our area. **The Lighthouse Opportunity Center opens on April 27, 2012** to provide direct paid employment and job training to persons who are blind and visually impaired. You can be a part of this exciting vision—see inside for more information. I really hope you will join us on April 27 to celebrate our Grand Opening! You will learn how people who are blind can live and work in our sighted world. Come and share in our vision that is changing lives every day. ■

27th Annual Chasco Coronation Ball



The Lighthouse congratulates all the 2012 nominees and thanks them for helping West Pasco to always be its best!

Each year, the Lighthouse hosts the Chasco Coronation Ball to recognize individuals who provide extraordinary community service and to raise funds for our Blind Babies programs. The Lighthouse thanks all who attend the ball, and for making each ball such a great success. **The proceeds help blind babies** learn the skills needed to live fuller lives with visual impairment. This year's ball was held on March 23. We were fortunate to have the family of one of our babies at the event.

Lily, age 18 months, has received Lighthouse services for one year. With Lighthouse Early Intervention Services, Lily is learning skills that are enabling her to meet her developmental milestones. According to Jennifer, Lily's mother, "It's one thing to know what the Lighthouse does ... but **when you actually need their services, they are truly a place of hope.**" Lily's parents Peter and Jennifer have become huge advocates for Early Intervention Services. At the ball, they mingled with the other ball-goers, and as they introduced Lily, they proudly spoke of their daughter's accomplishments. Lily, with her soft giggles and sweet smile, won over everyone she met. Peter and Jennifer are thankful for the opportunity to attend the ball and to share their story. "We honestly love how welcoming the Lighthouse has been to Lily and our family. We feel like you all are part of our family."

Pictures courtesy of Photos by J David:

Page 2 Top: 2012 King & Queen Nominees; Left Panel: All royalty in attendance, the James Family with Lighthouse's Executive Director Sylvia Perez and Board Chairperson Jamie Mick; Jamie Mick, Ball Chair Tina Shelton and Imperial Sponsor Dr. Rao Musunuru; 2011 Royalty Chuck Grey & Judith Koutsos. Page 3: 2012 Royalty Cindy Ewald & Bob Memoli.

View these pictures and more online at <http://lvib.org/events/past-events>. ■

Meet the Royals

At the ball, **Cindy Ewald was crowned Queen Chasco** and **Bob Memoli was crowned King Pithla**. The Honorees were nominated by their peers for their untiring service to the West Pasco community and to helping people in need.

Cindy Ewald was nominated by the Rotary Club of New Port Richey where she is an active member and has served on multiple committees. She serves on the boards of PACE Center for Girls, Leadership Pasco, and the American Cancer Society and is a member of the Community Service Council of West Pasco. She has received several awards including being the 2009 Honorary Governor of the West Pasco Chamber of Commerce.

Cindy states, "I'm truly humbled to be chosen as the 2012 Queen Chasco. With King Pithla, Bob Memoli by my side, I'm thrilled to be a representative for not only the Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind, but for all the non-profits in our community. This year's Chasco Fiesta has been a wonderful experience. It has opened many conversations about being a volunteer and ways to give back to our community."

Bob Memoli was nominated by The Center for Independence and the Rotary Club of Seven Springs. Bob is on the boards of Leadership Pasco, the Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired and Blind, and The Center for Independence. He is the current Chairman for the Pasco Education Advisory Council for the Take Stock in Children Foundation and has assisted the American Cancer Society and the Junior Service League with their fundraising activities. He has won many community service awards including Top Rotarian of the Year 2009.

Bob echoes Cindy's sentiments by saying, *"I am so excited about being King Pithla and promoting what the position represents: the true meaning of donating your time, talents and treasures to not-for-profit organizations—the giving of yourself to help so many people who would be left behind if not for organizations like the Lighthouse. I was fortunate enough this year to be selected to represent the hundreds of peers and friends who do the same thing I do, day in and day out—that is, help others and VOLUNTEER."* ■

The date for the 28th Annual Chasco Coronation Ball is pending —please stay tuned!



2012 Chasco Ball Sponsors

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A complete list of supporters can be found at www.lvib.org.

Job Training & Employment —OPPORTUNITY Leads to Success

The Lighthouse is committed to the employment of persons who are blind and visually impaired. We are fortunate to have several visually impaired persons on our professional staff, including Laurel Brown (Program Manager), Patricia Lopez (Rehabilitation Teacher), Penny Macpherson (Braille and Assistive Technology Teacher), Sandy Eckert (Administrative Assistant), and Sylvia Stinson-Perez (Executive Director). In 2010, we began to work on programs to provide employment opportunities for our community of persons with vision loss. We spent a lot of time developing a plan with the **National Industries for the Blind** and **SCORE**—two organizations dedicated to helping the community and small businesses succeed. They have been and will continue to be a tremendous resource for us as we move forward.



This photo and the one on the facing page show people who want to work—please give them an opportunity!

Our first initiative started in January 2011, with the opening of the Lighthouse WebStore, a Lighthouse e-commerce program that sells donated books (print and audio), DVD's, and CD's. Theresa Santana, a recent client alumni, was hired to coordinate the WebStore activities. In the last 13 months, **Theresa has proven to be a very talented professional and an important part of the Lighthouse team.** She has taken on additional responsibilities, identified and implemented ways to improve productivity, and trained others to do the type of work she is doing. Theresa manages the entire e-commerce process, including inventory, adding items to the internet sales site (<http://amzn.to/lvibstore>), and processing sales. The WebStore (on Amazon) has a 4.95 star rating—which indicates that Theresa is doing a fantastic job. Theresa states that she loves her job and is always excited to go to work. Sales are gradually increasing, and we are always accepting donations. She says she had proficiency with computers prior to her employment at the WebStore, but she has significantly increased her skill level with the computer, and with adaptive technology for persons who are visually impaired. She also stated that the work has increased her confidence and independence in other areas of her life. If you'd like to read more about Theresa, she was featured in our Spring 2011 edition of LVIB IN TOUCH (<http://lvib.org/lvib-in-touch>).

When we first hired Theresa, we coined the phrase “Keep Theresa Working.” Thanks to her hard work and the generosity of donors, we've succeeded in doing just that. Now it's time to move on and help others with vision impairments to succeed. We hope our new Lighthouse Opportunity Center will lead to the success of many, many more persons with visual impairments as they get a real opportunity to work. **Please join us on April 27 for our West Pasco Chamber of Commerce Ribbon Cutting Ceremony! ■**

*Please see **The Lighthouse Opportunity Center Wish List** on Page 7.*



The Lighthouse Opportunity Center Grand Opening Friday, April 27, 2012 - 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. 5944 Pine Hill Road, Port Richey, FL 34668

Something new and exciting is happening at the Lighthouse and you can be a part of it! You can help create jobs and change lives. Did you know that adults with vision impairment face a 70% unemployment rate? It is particularly difficult in these economically challenging times for blind persons to find work.

The Lighthouse OPPORTUNITY Center

The Lighthouse Opportunity Center will provide job training and paid employment to visually impaired and blind persons. Training and work experience will develop the skills required for employment, at the Lighthouse and in the community, in fields that include administration, product assembly, packaging, and light manufacturing.



You are invited to attend our Grand Opening Event being held on April 27. By attending this event, you will be showing your support of persons with vision impairments, and you will learn how persons with vision loss are able to gain real employment.

You can also get involved in the following ways:

- Put the Lighthouse to work for your company by **utilizing our employees and services** to complete your projects, such as assembly and packaging of kits, materials, etc., or sub-contract assembly or light manufacturing projects to us. We have a few projects, but need many more.
- Become a **Corporate Sponsor** of The Lighthouse Opportunity Center by providing in-kind contributions such as office supplies and equipment.
- Become an **Opportunity Partner** by agreeing to donate \$2,500 or more annually, which will enable us to provide job training and placement.
- Make a one-time **donation** in any amount to help us provide jobs.
- Our donors can be recognized in many ways—ask us for details!

Come tour our new facility on April 27 or arrange for a separate tour of The Lighthouse Opportunity Center. **For more information or to RSVP, please call 727-815-0303 or email sperez@lvib.org.** ■

*The Lighthouse Opportunity Center logo was created by Gen Morales,
one of our Lighthouse teens with a vision impairment.*

Client Profile —A Mother/Daughter Story

Angela knows about Macular Degeneration (MD), the eye disease that robs many people of their sight. Her 84-year-old mother, Mae also knows about MD. Their family has a long history of MD.

Mae is a retired physical therapist who thrived on physical activity. About eight years ago, however, Mae started to notice changes in her vision. She knew it was MD, but **she didn't tell anyone**. This reserved and private grandmother of six and great grandmother of fifteen didn't want to worry her family.

Mae lived alone with her vision loss. She knew her vision would decrease because of her family's medical history, however, she hoped her good eye wouldn't develop wet MD. As her vision loss increased, Mae's life began to change and her connection to the outside world diminished.

When Angela realized that her mother had become less active and seemed to be lonely, alarms began to go off. A red flag was raised when her mother became oblivious to dirty floors. Mae also withdrew from her regular activities. Growing up in a family affected by MD, Angela recognized the problem and knew what to do. She brought her mother to an Ophthalmologist and then to the Lighthouse.

Mae took part in the Lighthouse's **Independent Living Skills Program for Older Adults**, funded in part by the Division of Blind Services and by the United Way. The program teaches older adults how to live safely with vision loss. Training includes safe meal preparation, safe medication management, fall prevention, mobility training, and strategies to manage household tasks, as well as personal grooming and self care. Clients who take this training experience a higher quality of life and most are able to stay in their homes longer before moving into assisted living facilities or nursing homes.

Since completing the Independent Living Skills Program, Mae has more confidence in herself. She also has started a conversation with her daughter about MD. **Mae no longer has a problem talking about vision loss or asking for assistance when she needs it.** She'll take Angela's arm in the dark and will let her daughter know if she's feeling depressed. Mae is also more open with other members of the family. She proudly displays her Lighthouse program diploma on her living room wall for all to see. Angela feels fortunate to have become so close to her mother. She wants to be there for her mother as her mother has always been there for her. ■



Lighthouse programs help clients adjust to vision loss so they can open up and begin to heal emotionally.

A Mother/Daughter Story is a summarized version of this article.
The full story can be read online at <http://lvib.org/profiles>.



Beeping Eggs Equal Big Smiles for Lighthouse Kids

On March 17, 2012, the Lighthouse hosted a Beeping Easter Egg Hunt and BBQ. The children, from the youngest baby to the 12-year-olds, all had a great time with old and new friends with visual impairments, as they played and hunted for beeping and regular eggs. The beeping eggs were **donated by the Cotee River Lions Club and Gulf High Leo Club**. Beeping eggs provide children who can't see with the opportunity to participate in a traditional hunt and to have a good time like everyone else. Too often children with visual impairments sit on the sidelines—but not at the Lighthouse! ■

Ways You Can Help

The Lighthouse appreciates the support of our generous donors. Donors of \$500+ since December (not including ball donations): **C & K Clark Family Foundation, National Industries for the Blind, Pureenergy Management Services, Spring Hill Regional Hospital Auxiliary, United Way of Pasco and Hernando Counties, and The Walmart Foundation and Facility 1085**. A full list of supporters can be found at www.lvib.org.



Please help the Lighthouse meet the need for service by making **donations** and by **volunteering**. You can also become a member of **The Friends of the Lighthouse Annual Giving Program**, join **The Lighthouse Legacy Society** or purchase “A State of Vision” specialty license plate. Please visit <http://lvib.org/help/donate> to learn about all the ways you can help.

For your convenience, a generalized codicil for your will is provided on the back of this newsletter. We've also designed the QR code on the left, to take you directly to our **paypal donation page** using your smartphone. Please be assured that our online donation system is 100% secure. All donations are used to provide programs to our clients.

As we open The Lighthouse Opportunity Center, we need your help more than ever. Please come to the Grand Opening and/or make a donation. Our wish list includes:

- Donations to support employment training for persons who are blind and visually impaired.
- Donations for equipment needed in the manufacturing and office areas at the Center.
- Donations of books, audio books, CDs, and DVDs for the WebStore/e-commerce.
- Gift certificates for haircuts & clothes so clients can look their best for interviews and work.
- Placement opportunities for job training, job shadowing and employment.
- Please contact Sylvia Perez at sperez@lvib.org or 727-815-0303 to learn about other ways you can help. **Thank you for your generosity and continued support.** ■

About Us



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Toll Free
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Board and staff directory
<http://lvib.org/about/staff>

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Use this QR Code and
your smartphone to go
directly to our website!

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 service.

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. If possible, 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, and for always providing a superior product.

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

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