

IPVI INSIGHTS

Connecting & Supporting Families Whose Children are Visually Impaired, Including Those with Additional Disabilities

September
2012



BROOKFIELD ZOO MEMBERS ONLY OUTING

By Mary Zasbelski



The Brookfield Zoo outing this year was fantastic, the best ever. We had 135 attendees. During an incredibly hot summer, we lucked out to have a beautiful, sunny day that was in the low 80's, so we couldn't have asked for a better one.

We want to give a big shout out to those who made this event possible. The Chicago Zoological Society and its entire staff of docents to the dolphin trainers to the pizza lunch staff to Diane Wehrmeister, Director of Catered Events, were incredible. The staff answered questions, provided a wonderful environment for camaraderie, excitement and learning as we shared some of the best experiences to date.

Again we express our deep appreciation to the 100% Foundation and Frank Davis for providing the tickets and lunch. We appreciate our vendor, The World of Tees, for providing extraordinary expedited services in printing the tees on short notice, (thanks to the terrific handling by Gloria Udell at The Chicago

Lighthouse).



The Dolphins Were Jumping for Joy Because IPVI was in the House!

The traditional Dolphin Show this year was fantastic. The exceptional experience we had in the after-show, though, was incredible. The trainers brought 25 members of our group up close and personal to these incredible mammals. This was by far the longest and best interaction IPVI has had with these beautiful creatures. While we were not able to touch them due to safety issues, the dolphins made sure we knew they were there by splashing us, whistling, and performing additional tricks just for our group.

The Dolphin says "Thanks IPVI for Coming to Our

IPVI Insights

Bill Bielawski, President

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Now that **IPVI Insights** is posted on our website www.ipvi.org, it can be longer and in full color. For example, look at the great pictures from this year's Brookfield Zoo trip.

Every month, IPVI Treasurer Vicki Juskie, her son Matt, and our NAPVI Regional Representative Pam Stern each write a "support" column to help you deal with events and feelings that you may be having.

Education is the most important topic. Pam Stern's column this month gives advice for parents and teachers. Mary Zabelski announces a parent training session "Start the School Year Off Right" and her Preschool Enrichment Program. We tell you how to apply for IPVI's scholarships. Has your child had a remarkable teacher? Then nominate them for the Illinois Association of Blind Students' 2012 Teacher Excellence Award. To get the special education they need, our kids first need to be identified as visually impaired. Tell the other parents you know about the Prevent Blindness advice about eye exams.

A closely related topic is Braille Literacy. APH and Seedlings help you get Braille books. Read the article "Braille Babies: Pre-reading Skills" to prepare your child for Braille.

Last month, I suggested that you look for sports opportunities. I found a Saturday bowling program by the Western DuPage Special Recreation Association (www.wdsra.com). This month, there are four articles dealing with sports: Team USA, No Slowing Down, Keeping the Olympics Flame Burning, and Dare2Tri.

See the Chicago Lighthouse announcements about Music Therapy, and take special note of the Cooking School by a totally blind chef!

MS. VIC'S VOLLEYS
Victoria Juskie, IPVI Treasurer

VOLLEY I

Since our last publication, no new members have joined during this period.

VOLLEY II

Spoiler alert! Today's column is going to let me vent a little about something that really bothered me though, admittedly, I didn't witness this exchange directly. You see, it came to my attention and it truly made me unhappy to be told that one of the children in attendance at the dolphin show for IPVI was upset because only the blind or visually impaired children were called up to be close and personal with the dolphins. The comment reiterated to me went something like, "They can't see it anyway so why are they up close?" Of course, this child with no vision or physical issues is a spoiled, self-centered brat, to say the least; and his/her parents are not doing such a great job teaching the kid empathy. Shame on them and their child. It upset me that these words would even be spoken, especially when an event such as this is specifically for the children who are visually impaired or blind. Giving them as close up an experience as possible was the whole point of the day.

Now I understand that many times other children and/or siblings of kids with special needs feel slighted because of all of the attention given to those who need more. It's these self-centered, the-world-revolves-around-me feelings that all children (and, unfortunately some immature grownups) may feel. It is these types of feelings that can cause marriages to fail because one spouse cannot handle the fact that their child's special needs take precedence over many daily issues -- not

(Continued on page 5)

**SHARING THE VISION,
PARENT TO PARENT**

Let's have a dialogue. Do you have a question? One of us may have an answer or at least a suggestion. Submit questions and responses for the IPVI Newsletter to Pam Stern, NAPVI Region 3 Representative:

pamstern3@gmail.com

SEPTEMBER QUESTION

What does your child need in order to have a successful academic year?

It does not matter how old or young/disabled or abled a child is, the answer to a successful academic year is the same for all. Be an advocate for your child. Encourage your child and let them know that as long as they try their best they will succeed. Keep the doors of communication open with their teachers and educational staff including the PE and art teacher. Let your child know that if there are problems at school that they should either talk to you or someone they are comfortable with at school.

- 1) Promoting literacy skills.
- 2) Empowering parents to support their children's development and to advocate on their children's behalf.
- 3) If the student is not making expected progress, adjustments need to be made, and additional services may be added at any time.

If there is a chance that the child's vision will worsen, insist that the child learn Braille. If the school district doesn't have a TVI well versed in Braille, make sure

(Continued on page 11)



“Show!”



culators, and clocks which were won by Lilly Ewen, Ryan Henders, Cathy Henders (2), and Amber Butler. John Chaney was the lucky recipient of the 50-50 raffle prize of \$115. He generously donated \$50 of his winnings back to IPVI. Thanks to all of you who participated in

this raffle.

During our lunch, we had a wonderful never-ending pizza buffet with a terrific speaker, Bill Jurek, who is a radio personality at The Chicago Lighthouse and the FCC Video Programming and Emergency Access Advisory Committee to name a few. His encouraging words and his advice regarding guide dogs were invaluable.



We had a raffle with some wonderful prizes supplied by The Chicago Lighthouse such as talking watches, cal-

The rest of the day was spent visiting all the different exhibits and animal attractions around this wonderful zoo environment. Thanks to all of our IPVI members who joined us this day, and we hope to see you next year.



(Continued from page 3) - Ms. Vic's Volleys

to mention that it's more work, effort and many times full of heartaches. We parents of special needs children who learn to measure success in much different levels than typically cry when our children are asleep. We worry mounds higher than mountains and seek out all the expert advice we can possibly identify to help them. In doing this, we may, in fact, neglect others who are close to us. Sometimes spouses don't hold up too well during these trying times. It's hard when this happens, but remember, that speaks to their characters' makeup, not yours.

It's not that we want to but to many of us it's an inherent need we have to protect our children who have been shortchanged somehow. We want to level the playing field. We can't stand for one more thing to go wrong for our children when they have so much on their plates already. Consequently, whenever some over indulged little one makes an insidiously self-centered statement like "Why do they get it instead of me?", I think to myself, "Tough. My kid gets this treat and you don't. You'll have the ability to do with your life anything you set your heart on. I pray to the Lord every day that my child with special needs will have some or all of those same opportunities. If it's determined that I know s/he can't, then any little extra I can give him/her, I'm giving. If that makes you unhappy, oh, bloody well. You deal with it. My kid has had enough to deal with."

So my tip of the day is, whenever someone makes stupid absurd comments like this, rather than getting in his/her face, instead feel smug to yourself that your child has someone who truly looks out for him/her. The selfish child has his/her own handicap in that this one may never really know how to feel empathy and selflessness and, therefore, will never truly be happy. Because only when you truly give of yourself do you feel whole.

Remember, too, to take a little time with your other children and your partner to make them feel special on a regular basis. Also, don't forget to thank them for their help and let them know you appreciate them, too. This will go a long way in showing you have empathy not just for your special needs child but for all the others who are close to both of you.



ASK M@

Ask M@



Hi, guys. Hope everyone has been doing well. I know for me as always it has been very busy with the school golf season again. So this month, I would like to talk to you

about how important giving back really is. The main reason that I have is one that you may not think is an obvious one at all.

First off, there have been a number of organizations that have helped me and to whom I am very grateful. When I was very young, the Chicago Lighthouse provided a birth to three early intervention program. This is an amazing institution that continues to help me and so many people. I have given back to them by speaking at their Glenview Center Grand Opening.

Additionally, I recently played in the Spectrios Golf Classic. This was a golf outing fundraiser held for the institution that helped me get my driving bioptics and painted contacts. I was asked if I would give a speech at the end of

the day. I agreed and basically bragged to all the donors about the amazing job they do and talked about how they have changed my life. I just wanted to give back to them for all that they have done for me as well.

Then amazingly, something neat happened and I found that with my giving back, I was rewarded. You see, after this speech, everything seemed to be winding down. But then the owner of Ocutech, the maker of my biop-tics, came up to me and congratulated me on a good speech and all of that. As we got to talking, the thing that amazed me was that he told my doctor, who was also standing with us, that if I ever needed any repairs or anything, just to let him know and he would make it happen. He said also that I am the type of person that he wants being a spokesperson for his company. And if that wasn't enough, he also said that if I ever came to New York, he would definitely have a job opportunity for me. Now, I don't know if all this is true; but nonetheless, he still took the time to say those nice things.

So, basically what I am getting at is that not only is giving back a good thing to do, but it also can be very good for you. Sometimes, you just never know who you will meet at a community service event and how this could be very beneficial for you. So, my call to action for everyone this month is to go out and try to give back in as many ways as possible. You just never know what may result.

As Laura Arrillaga-Andreessen - Philanthropist said:

"Giving is a universal opportunity. Regardless of your age, profession, religion, income bracket, and background, you have the capacity to create change."

Until next time, have a great one.

M@



Preparing for London

This weekend the US Women's Paralympic Goalball Team will be in Portland, OR for a training camp on their way to defending their Gold medal at the 2012 London Paralympic Games. We wish them a successful training camp as they work towards that repeat Gold medal!

"Best marathon in the world"

Get your running shoes on and start training for the 2012 USABA Marathon National Championships sponsored by VSP® Vision Care at the California International Marathon on December 2 in Sacramento, CA. Click here for more information.

Represent USABA

Get your TEAM USABA gear before the Paralympics! Check out our awesome apparel on our website at www.usaba.org. We have polo shirts, t-shirts, sweatshirts and backpacks.

Copeland Scholarship

The Arthur E. and Helen Copeland \$500 scholarship is for legally blind students enrolling/enrolled at a two-year or four-year or technical institution or university as a full-time student. In order to be considered you must send a cover letter and transcript by September 14 of each academic year. For more information go to www.usaba.org.

2013 IBSA World Youth Championships and Parapan American Games

The International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) selected USABA to host the 2013 IBSA World Youth Championships and Parapan American Games to be held in Colorado Springs, Colorado June 9-15, 2013. Youth ath-

letes ages 12-19 from around the globe and adult athletes from North and South America will compete in Athletics, Goalball, Judo, Powerlifting and Swimming competitions. Stay tuned to our website, www.usaba.org, for additional information to be released in the near future.

Paralympic Spotlight: Track and Field

Track and field is one of the most watched and highly anticipated events in the Paralympics. In the T11 classification David Brown (San Diego, Calif.), Tanner Gers (Tucson, Ariz.), and Elexis (Lex) Gillette (Raleigh, N.C.) who also participates in field sports will all be trying their hardest to bring home a Gold medal for the USA. In the T12 classification Josiah Jamison (Vance, S.C.) will compete and Markeith Price (Nashville, Tenn.) is in the T13/F13 classification. Josiah Jamison, a 2008 Paralympic medalist, will compete in the 100m and 200m. Since he was born, Jamison has had retinitis pigmentosa - a hereditary eye disease that affects peripheral and night vision. He was introduced to racing at the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind in Spartanburg by Jack Todd, a staff member at the school, and Royal Mitchell, a teammate from the 2008 U.S. Paralympic Team. Entering Beijing, he won his first-ever gold medal in the 100m. He also won a bronze medal in the 100m at the IPC Athletics World Championships. Another Paralympic veteran, Lex Gillette, totally blind, has acquired a world record, two Paralympic silver medals, eight American records and twelve national championships in the long jump, triple jump and 100m. Gillette was born with a visual impairment and when he was eight his vision began to fade due to recurrent retina detachments. After ten operations, his vision still could not be stabilized and was told that he would eventually be completely blind. However, he did not let this slow him down the Paralympic Games are known as the highest pinnacle of competition for athletes with a physical or vis-

ual disability, and Gillette has managed to medal in both Games.

New IBSA website

Today, the International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) launched a new and informative user friendly website that easier to read. Visit the website at <http://www.ibsa-sports.org/>.

No Slowing Down



Rachel (the shorter of the two) and her sister, Rebecca, have teamed up for several athletic events since the end of 2011.”

Taking part in a triathlon means, at one point, having to jump into a body of water with potentially hundreds of other people and then swim frantically, so as to break from the pack. “It’s typical for there to be panic attacks in the water,” says Rachel Weeks, conjuring images of limbs flailing, elbows and knees knocking, water swallowed. “It’s scary.”

In Rachel’s case, it’s even worse.

She has Usher syndrome, a retinal disease that affects both the ears and eyes. Her visual field is less than 10 degrees, and roughly 70 percent of her hearing is gone, which means she

needs hearing aids. But she can't wear those in the water.

So, while thrashing her way through the throng during those initial moments of the swimming leg of a triathlon (the others are running and biking), Rachel depends heavily on her guide—her younger sister, Rebecca—to whom she's connected by a tether. The experience, she says, "can be claustrophobic."

So the big question is, Why does she do it?

First, it's a way to raise money for the Foundation Fighting Blindness, with which Rachel, who's 29, got involved in 2011, after coming across its Race to Cure Blindness website. The attraction was, she didn't have to limit herself to just one event to raise funds, but could leverage any and all competitions she might enter to bring in pledges.

Which brings us to the second reason. For years, after giving birth to her daughters—Audrey, 5, and Hailey, 3—Rachel didn't exercise or socialize much. She was working part-time from her Columbia, South Carolina, home while raising the girls with her husband, Zach, a general manager at Sam's Club, and "sitting in a chair or just playing with the kids on the floor."

But growing up—first in Nashville, Tennessee, then in Tampa, Florida—she'd been very active: riding horses, cheerleading, swimming. So when the opportunity to run a 5K for the Foundation popped up last December, Rachel gave it a shot. "I was immediately addicted," she says. Since then, as a member of the two-person Team Light Up the Darkness, she's competed in a 10K, a half-marathon and a triathlon.

And she's just getting started. "We have a whole race calendar," she says – another half-marathon, a marathon and two triathlons, all

before year's end. "Then we have a 2013 calendar," she adds, laughing.

Getting to this point wasn't easy. At age 3, Rachel was diagnosed as hearing impaired, with the cause thought to be nerve damage. So growing up, whenever she felt off-balance, she attributed it to that. But then she had problems seeing at night. An extensive eye exam at age 19 confirmed that she has retinitis pigmentosa, which, linked to the hearing problems, led to the Usher diagnosis.

Lots of research followed, which put the Foundation on Rachel's radar, but it took her and the family, including her parents, years to grieve and then get used to the fact of living with the disease. Once everyone did, it was time "to do something," Rachel says.

Now, everyone lends support, including Zach, who – on weekends and at the end of his 12-to-14-hour days – takes the kids so that Mom can train with Aunt Becca. No one else in Rachel's family, going back for generations, has or has had a vision or hearing problem, she says, but a recent scare with Audrey, who didn't do well on a hearing exam, "freaked me out." Though it appears that Usher is not the cause, "it's one thing for me to have to go through this," Rachel says, "but if my children would have to?"

So she keeps on running, biking and swimming, and collecting pledges while also engaging in fundraisers of her own – selling Light Up the Darkness lanterns, for example, and planning a golf fundraiser in Tampa, where her parents still live, this fall.

There is, also, one more reason Rachel competes in such rigorous events.

"I'm trying to raise awareness about retinal diseases," she explains. "And when people ask about the tether during races, and I say

I'm legally blind, they wonder why I do it. People often don't understand that those with impairments can be active, too. I'm showing them what we can do, not what we can't."

Reprinted from the Family Connect website at www.familyconnect.org.

Let us Keep the Olympic Flame Burning

Prepared for IPVI Insights/September 2012

By Erika Musser

In the IPVI *Insights*/August 2012, President Bill Bielawski calls parents of the visually impaired/blind children to action with his introductory article "Give Your Child a Sporting Chance." How long have Heidi, my husband Fred and I been waiting for this wake-up call? Too many years -- since Heidi attended Chicago Public High School as a freshman.

When the educators within the Chicago Public Schools did not believe in Heidi's athletic potentials, there was always the Leaning Tower YMCA in Niles (close to our home), where she could find volunteers with a heart and a broader vision. During the last few years, Heidi has participated passionately in coaching and competing as a fully integrated member of the Grays Sharks Masters Swim Team upon invitation of Team President Ken Cohen. I felt that the time had come to demonstrate that Heidi should not be the only isolated case, but many visually impaired/blind children as well as children with other physical challenges should have the doors open for swimming.

At the perfect time, along came Rupa (now 11 yrs. old) and Aihua (now 7 years old) with their heartwarmingly dedicated parents Alan (blind) and Paula Sprecher (visually im-

paired). Without hesitation, the Leaning Tower YMCA allowed the girls to come to the pool with guest passes. Both girls seemed to love the water instantly. Initially, Heidi asked them to lay on her back, while she swam under water. Observing the girls having so much fun, there was no way stopping them from taking regular swim lessons. And to our greatest surprise, Executive Director Amanda Yeast embraced the idea! She deserves a huge applause! With the start of the Fall 2011 swim classes, both girls were fully mainstreamed. The smiling faces of the coaches were a positive sign that they stood up to the challenge -- actually, they didn't consider the girls a challenge. To everyone's surprise, Rupa and Aihua showed no apprehension nor fear and the sighted members of the class took them on as their "buddies" in an amazingly, very natural way. As a matter of fact, when it came to jumping off the diving board, there were others who gained courage from Rupa and Aihua.

The experiment worked! At the moment, both girls are refining their freestyle, back and breast stroke. I Have a Dream! I hope for Rupa and Aihua to become totally integrated members of the Leaning Tower YMCA swim team in the near future. Why not!!!

The Sprecher Family is a true inspiration for us all! Alan and Paula adopted Rupa from India and Aihua from China. The love for each other within the family is uniquely strong and makes the impossible possible!

Within the IPVI community let us spread the seeds, which Heidi planted not only statewide, but nationwide and globally. If you have any questions, please contact the Aquatic Director of the Leaning Tower YMCA. If there exists a need for financial assistance, any YMCA should be able to come up with support in the form of a scholarship.

The Olympics may be over, but the YMCAs

are calling to keep the Olympic Flame burning!



By the way, Bill Bielawski is phenomenally knowledgeable in computer technology for the visually impaired/blind computer user. Give him a phone call (630-357-8576) and he will enjoy helping you out if you find yourself in need.

street Beach. The camp was from 10-4 on July 17 and 18. Blind youths from the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired and other VI kids from Chicago and the Suburbs, plus other youth with special needs had 1:1 guides who are very skilled, patient and kind hearted. Their selfless acts seemed to work magic on our children. Our kids were having lots of fun, smiling the whole time, and creating a good bonding experience. On the 2nd day, they did a trial mini triathlon and everyone loved it. Justin practiced swimming in Lake Michigan by the beaches, biking with a guide on tandem, and kind of walking fast, which to him is running, and in the first trial on Wednesday, July 19, he placed 2nd overall among 18 kids, some were very special needs and some were typical kids. He and many other kids from the camp completed the course. The rough waves did not stop them. Justin decided he wanted to do his first ever Triathlon on July 28, 2012.



Give a Try to be a Part of "Dare2Tri" Group
By Tina Egle

I definitely will have Justin participate in Dare2Tri camp group and will let him do as many races as he would like to do. I highly recommend all parents to consider placing your kids in a Dare2Tri athlete group. Justin bonded with many staff members and new found friends. This organization teaches our kids social skills, and with the physical activities, it helped them to develop good muscle strength.



This Summer Justin had a blast!!! He found a fun and safe summer activity. Our dear friends Erika and Heidi Musser recommended that Justin try out one Thursday to come out with them to the Northerly Island

Here are two videos from Dare2Tri. Enjoy!

Dare2Tri Kids Paratriathlon Camp <http://youtu.be/tMdU2BLUMdE>

Dare2Tri 2012 South Shore Kids Triathlon <http://youtu.be/mZA47SfC7XI>

in Downtown Chicago. Dare2Tri group Leaders Keri Schindler and Dan Tun from Chicago Park District organized during summer every Thursday for Children and Adults with Disabilities to come out for cycling, running and swimming. It is 1:1 guide ratio where all staff volunteered their time.

Keri and Dan are to be commended for their great effort in putting together for the first annual Dare2Tri kids' camp at South Shore 63rd



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that an independent Braille instructor is brought in and that the school district pays for him/her.

Early intervention is key to a child's success.

Students must learn to be proficient in adaptive technology, and must be allowed the opportunity to select technology which will maximize their potential. The technology must be available both at school and at home, to allow equal educational access as their sighted peers.

If we expect less from children with visual impairments than we do from other children, then that is what we are going to get.

Refrain from overprotecting a child, and instead provide opportunities to increase self-confidence and independence. Don't avoid a task simply because a child experiences frustration or failure; keep expectations high.

Educating Students With Visual Impairments for Inclusion in Society

<http://www.afb.org/section.aspx?FolderID=3&SectionID=44&TopicID=189&DocumentID=1344T>

“There must be adequate personnel preparation programs to train staff to provide specialized services which address the unique academic and non-academic curriculum needs of students with visual impairments. There must also be ongoing specialized personnel development opportunities for all staff working with these students as well as specialized parent education.”

Looking Through Their Eyes: Teaching Suggestions for Visually Impaired Stu-

dents

<http://www.brighthubeducation.com/special-ed-visual-impairments/62427-ideas-for-how-to-teach-visually-impaired-students-seeing-the-big-picture/>

What You Can Do

In addition to classroom changes, it is often necessary to make adjustments in your teaching style and routine in order to accommodate your visually impaired students. Here are some things you can do:

- Explain everything in detail - Lessons, lectures, presentations, visuals on the overhead, diagrams should all be explained in detail for those students who are blind and have no vision.
- Make sure to always give directions orally.
- Help with directional movement and body orientation (move to the left, the board is straight ahead of you, your test is slightly to the left side of your desk, etc.)
- Always offer to read written information aloud.
- Always identify people including yourself by name in case they cannot see well enough to identify them, you or the students in their group.
- Always use a tactile or auditory signal when necessary instead of a visual cue. For example, for clean up or lining up, try hand clapping signals or a song. Instead of showing just pictures, try adding sound effects.
- Always make sure to notify these students ahead of time when there will be changes in the school or classroom schedule, such as special events, guest speakers, etc.
- As mentioned earlier, order all texts, workbooks and tests in large print or Braille if possible. Provide tactile learning experiences when possible

Start the School Year Off Right

Learn to be an Advocate for your Child!

The Family Resource Center on Disabilities will provide information to support your child in the community and in the school system.

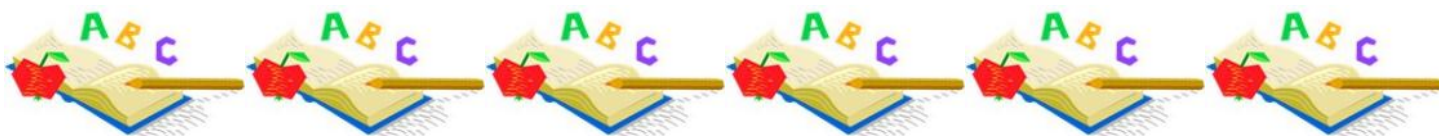
Date: Tuesday, September 18th, 2012

Time: 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Where: The Chicago Lighthouse
1850 W. Roosevelt Road
Chicago, IL 60608

**Please RSVP to Mary Zabelski (312) 997-3675 by Friday,
September 13, 2012**

Dinner and Child Care Provided!!!



Preschool Enrichment Program 2012 Fall Session Now Enrolling!!!

Come Join Us for 8 Weeks of Fun, Friends and Learning
Students will learn social skills, daily living skills,
pre-Braille/Braille skills and much, much more!

Program Dates: Tuesdays & Thursdays
Starting September 25-November 15

Program Time: 2:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m.

Program Location: The Chicago Lighthouse
Children's Development Center
1850 W. Roosevelt Rd.
Chicago, IL 60608

Fee: \$275

For enrollment information contact
Mary Zabelski (312) 997-3675 by September 20





We're banking on you to
SET NEW SIGHTS!

Race for TEAMLighthouse
in the **Bank of America Chicago Marathon**
October 7, 2012

Be an inspirational champion,
EnVISION yourself crossing the finish line.

Sign up for **TEAM Lighthouse**

TEAMLighthouse supports
The Chicago Lighthouse
for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

(i.e. instead of talking about rocks, bring them in to pass around. Same with shells, foods, properties of matter, etc.) It is important to give them hands-on exploration that does not solely rely on their sight.

- Use a tape recorder as much as possible.
- Whenever you leave or enter the classroom, speak to the class notifying those visually impaired students that you are in proximity.
- Have patience with them and repeat any or all information as many times as necessary.

Testing

Making accommodations to a test environment will afford visually impaired students the same opportunities for academic success and high scores as those without a disability.

It is important to check with the student to see what arrangements need to be made in order for them to complete their test efficiently.

Here are some things they may ask for or suggestions for adjustments:

1. Make sure the test format suits their visual ability (Braille if needed, large print, recorded, etc.) Reading the test aloud may also be the best method for test implementation.
2. Allow for more time and repeat questions if necessary.
3. Try adding visuals with bold or distinct contrasting colors that will help them to identify certain objects in a diagram, graph, etc. Also, using tactile learning through 3D objects can help in a lab or science setting.
4. Allow the use of large-buttoned or talking calculators, provided they do

not distract other students.

5. Allow after school time to review or repeat any questions missed during class (only if they have concentration or focus problems).

OCTOBER QUESTION

What extra-curricular (Expanded Core Curriculum) activities would you like your child to be exposed to, based on interest, and/

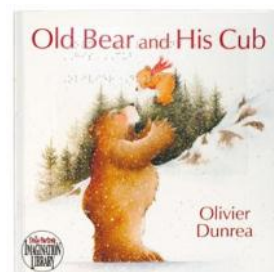


or promoting independence?

Newsletter entries will be published maintaining the anonymity of all unless otherwise approved.

APH Endowment Makes Free Braille/Print Books Available for Preschool Children

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIIL) has provided many Imagination Library books in a digital audio format for young children who are blind and visually impaired. Now, five titles each year will also be available in print/braille format. The titles selected from the current year's list of DPIIL books published by Penguin Group, are those most appropriate to translate into



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IPVI's Matthew Benedict Juskie Scholarship Fund

For students who are blind or visually impaired

Any individual intending to continue his/her education at a college, university or trade school and is interested in being considered for the MBSF, must meet the following criteria: Illinois resident, blind or visually impaired, undergraduate or graduate student, and an IPVI member.

The candidate's application is processed free of charge. The student must mail or fax a written request to receive a copy of the application from IPVI. Then the student must complete the MBSF Application Form, provide 3 completed Reference Forms, submit medical records or a letter from the vision specialist confirming the condition, and mail them to IPVI. The applicant may attach a 1-page resume of clubs, offices held, or any other pertinent information concerning his/her activity record.

The IPVI Board of Directors will review all scholarship applications and select the winners. IPVI reserves the right to announce such awards in its newsletters and marketing materials.

The MBSF is funded completely from tax-deductible donations from individuals, companies and corporations who support IPVI's goals. Any individuals or groups wishing to donate to this fund, please forward your tax-deductible donations to IPVI. Thank you for your continued support of IPVI.



To request a scholarship application, please contact the Scholarship Program Coordinator, Vicki Juskie at: 815-464-6162 or vajuskie@aol.com



**The Chicago Lighthouse Vision Rehabilitation Center
Presents:**

**Tots and Company
Music Therapy
A *new* six-week session**

September 12 - October 17, 2012

10:00am-11:00am

222 Waukegan Road, Glenview, Illinois 60025



**Taught by a Certified Music Therapist
Music therapy promotes language development, exposes
children to new musical instruments, and promotes social
interaction.**

Register Now!

Pam Stern, Manager of Youth/Senior Programs

847.510.5024

pamstern3@chicagolighthouse.org



**The Chicago Lighthouse Vision Rehabilitation Center
Proudly presents cooking classes with Chef Laura Martinez**

**Mondays, 5:00pm-7:00pm, September 24 - December 12
222 Waukegan Road, Glenview, IL 60025**



Learn to cook: Chinese fried rice; pizza; brioche; couscous; “not your boxed” macaroni and cheese; Grandma’s recipes, and student requests.

Explore: the history of the food of the week; the cultural aspects of the food; menu planning; seasonal fruits and vegetables, and budgetary factors.

Laura Martinez is a graduate of the prestigious Le Cordon Bleu culinary program at the Cooking and Hospitality Institute of Chicago. She is totally blind, and is equal, if not better, than her sighted colleagues in knife skills as well as her ability to utilize herbs and spices, through her senses of touch and smell. Her finished product is as accomplished as any your chef, although Laura has the distinct honor of being a chef at one of Chicago’s highest rated restaurants, Charlie Trotters.

To register contact:

**Pam Stern, Manager of Youth/Senior Programs
847.510.2054 or pam.stern@chicagolighthouse.org**



Also coming soon:



Computer Classes



Judo



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222 Waukegan Road | Glenview, IL 60025
www.chicagolighthouse.org

**Seedlings Braille Books for Children 2013
Catalog is Available
with 68 New Books Titles**

Seedlings is very excited to announce that their 2013 Catalog is now available. The new books range in size and scope from a Print-Braille-&-Picture book called "Llama Llama Hoppity Hop" to the 489-page braille copy of "The Hunger Games (Book 1)", bringing their total to almost 1,300 books. The new books are also listed on their website at www.seedlings.org and are ready to be ordered!

Seedlings' books are always "on sale": they sell them for only a fraction of what it costs to make them, and their prices have not been raised in over 25 years!

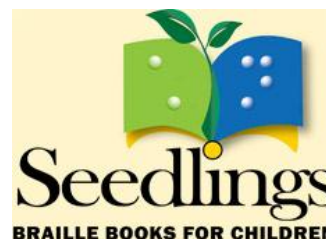
ALSO . . .

2012 Book Angel Program ... Register Now!

Seedlings' Book Angel Program is open to visually-impaired children who live in the US and Canada, and through this program each child can receive 2 free Seedlings' books per calendar year (you list 4 of our books and they will send 2 of them).

If you have not yet registered for your child's 2012 books, fill out the registration form online at www.seedlings.org. Questions? Please call Seedlings toll-free at 800-777-8552.

Seedlings Braille Books for Children is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization dedicated to increasing the opportunity for literacy by providing high quality, low-cost children's literature in braille.



CONVENTION

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE
BLIND OF ILLINOIS STATE CONVENTION**

Expecting the Impossible

**October 5th, 6th and 7th, 2012
Chicago, Illinois**

Please mark the date for the NFB 2012 State Convention. There will be special events for our new Illinois Association of Blind Merchants, our blind parents, kids, guide dog users, students, teens and so much more. Of course, our general sessions and exhibits will be jam-packed as well.

Feel free to contact Patti Gregory-Chang with comments, questions, or concerns at 773-307-6440. Hope to see you all there.

National Federation of the Blind of Illinois is not on twitter at www.twitter.com/nfbi. We also have a facebook page. Just search for "NFBI."

Patti Gregory-Chang, Esq.
Chairperson, NFB Scholarship Committee
scholarships@nfb.org
President, NFB of Illinois
pattichang@att.net • www.nfbfillinois.org



FREE PARENT WORKSHOPS



The Family Resource Center on Disabilities (FRCD) offers parents of children with disabilities birth to 21 years old, their helpers, relatives, professionals, and interested community members no-cost training and workshops, telephone and e-mail assistance, and resources to help claim their role as the child's most effective and significant advocate. You are invited to contact FRCD for information, resources, support and training. 1-312-939-3513, info@frcd.org www.frcd.org, 20 East Jackson Blvd., Room 300, Chicago, IL 60604

1-312-939-3513 • info@frcd.org • www.frcd.org



**20 East Jackson Blvd., Room 300, Chicago,
IL 60604**

MISCELLANEOUS



Illinois Association of Blind
Students
2012 Teaching Excellence Award
Guidelines and Instructions

Do you know a great teacher of the blind and visually impaired? Please complete the attached form to recommend that teacher receive an award from the Illinois Association of Blind Students.

Background: The Illinois Association of Blind

Students (IABS), a division of the National Federation of the Blind of Illinois and a chapter of the National Association of Blind Students, presents two Excellence in Teaching Blind Students Awards to deserving educators at the NFBI State Convention each fall. This year's presentation will take place in Chicago, Illinois at the Annual Banquet, the evening of Saturday, October 6, 2012. IABS will present one award to a teacher of blind children and a second award to a teacher of blind adults. In order to qualify, the educator must provide educational instruction, training, resources or itinerant services to blind and visually impaired students in the State of Illinois.

Instructions: Please complete these forms and submit them by September 15, 2012. You may email or mail your completed nomination forms to:

Dkent5817@att.net

Deborah Kent Stein
5817 N Nina Ave
Chicago, IL 60631

If you have any questions, please write to the above addresses or call (773) 203 1394. No nominations will be accepted after September 15, 2012. See forms on next two pages.

Braille Babies: Strategies to Promote Pre-reading Skills in Young Children Who Are Blind and Visually Impaired

By Kimberly Avila M.A., COMS

Kimberly is a mother, experienced teacher of students with visual impairments and ACVREP Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist. She has taught at the graduate level preparing service providers for the blind and visually impaired, is a published author, curriculum developer and guest presenter. Kimberly's first daughter was born extremely premature and she experienced the NICU, early intervention and the special education process as a parent after years of serving in the professional capacity in these environments. This experience inspired the creation of several parent programs to empower families to be actively involved in promoting developmental growth in their children who are blind or visually impaired.

Parents who have participated in Braille Babies over the past seven years wanted to begin teaching braille to their children, but frequently expressed frustration and concern over their own knowledge of braille. Some of the parents felt their children were put at a disadvantage because sighted children had ample access to print learning experiences in the early years and commonly begin Kindergarten at least knowing the alphabet and possibly reading. Many parents expressed disappointment that their children would not begin to learn braille until Kindergarten and wondered how they can teach letters and braille basics to their children. For the select parents whose children were being introduced to braille as preschoolers, parents wanted to know how they can supplement braille literacy support at home through their regular routine. Through the activities listed below, participants documented a significant increase in their use of pre-braille literacy at home.

It is first important to understand how braille is constructed in order to proceed on to the activities.

(Continued on page 24)

Illinois Association of Blind Students
2012 Teaching Excellence Award
Nomination Form

Name of Nominee: _____

Please check one:

_____ Teacher of Blind Children

_____ Teacher of Blind Adults

School or Organization where Teacher Works:

Teacher's Phone Number: _____

Teacher's Email Address: _____

Nominator's Name (Person completing this form):

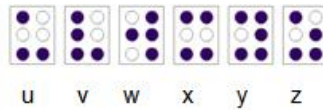
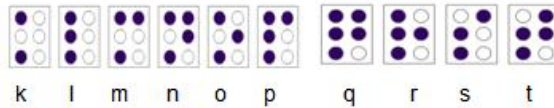
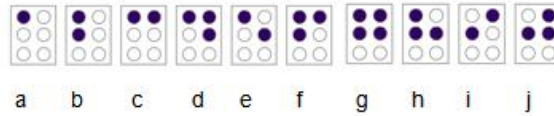
Nominator's Phone Number: _____

Nominator's Email Address: _____

(Continued from page 21) - Braille Babies

Braille is based off of a six dot cell:

All letters are made through combinations of this six dot cell:



Computer braille program: Jonathan Avila © 2009

Braille is also presented in contracted format, where letters are combined into symbols through rules to save space. Comparison of uncontracted and contracted braille:

Print	Uncontracted	Contracted
people	⠠⠏⠠⠑⠠⠑⠠⠞⠠⠑	⠠⠏⠞⠑
children	⠠⠉⠠⠊⠠⠗⠠⠎⠠⠑⠠⠗⠠⠎	⠠⠉⠞⠊⠞⠑⠞⠎
chance	⠠⠉⠠⠏⠠⠎⠠⠉⠠⠎	⠠⠉⠞⠎⠉
please	⠠⠏⠠⠗⠠⠑⠠⠗⠠⠑	⠠⠏⠞⠗⠑
about	⠠⠁⠠⠑⠠⠒⠠⠕⠠⠞	⠠⠁⠞⠒⠕

Summary of most popular activities and interventions:

Braille cells are everywhere!

Participants were initially introduced to the concept that those six dots are everywhere! Once the pattern is recognized, it is amazing how frequently the braille cell is identified. Muffin pans, egg cartons, the common arrangement of knobs on a dresser in two columns and three rows should always be pointed out to the child when a braille cell is naturally found in the environment. Children who are not visually impaired have this type of opportunity to look at print letters in fun, large and creative ways, so it is important to make this same learning experience available to children



who are blind or visually impaired.

Activities and materials:

Muffin pan: use a ½ dozen muffin pan to organize and present various tasks to your child. Example, try snack time in a muffin pan! Create variations in how you present the snack and encourage your child to search the cell tactually to find all of the snack items. Consider using small plastic cups or paper muffin liners for the snacks and for ease in cleaning up.



Use the same pan with tennis balls for an easy way to manipulate dots in the cells.



Sample M&M plastic egg display tray with painters' tape serving as a cell dividing line

Plastic eggs, cartons and egg displays: Springtime presents an extraordinary time to gather inexpensive materials for encouraging braille. As these items go on clearance, search for fun plastic eggs to fill ½ dozen egg cartons and ask your local retailers to save cartons holding plastic egg displays. For example, the green, double braille cell below was originally a display for individually wrapped plastic eggs filled with M&M's. I asked the manager at my local grocery store to hold these displays for me after the spring holidays and retrieved them for free. These cells can be used for making braille letters and for sorting items. Make sure to use the layout of the braille cell to organize projects and activities. Separate beads for jewelry the child is putting together or put a different color of paint in each dot when

your child is painting (yes, some children who are blind enjoy painting and the fine motor skill exercise is good for their development). The best part is these trays are disposable and easy to clean.

Stock up on various plastic eggs with differing textures. For example, place one smooth egg in a ½ dozen egg carton full of football textured eggs. Find eggs that have themes representing you or your child's interests.



Recycled egg cartons with themed, textured plastic eggs

It's easy to create inexpensive braille cells out of commonly used household items. For example, use Velcro fasteners to form two columns and three rows on the top of a small storage box. Save thin milk lids to serve as braille dots and you have a portable way to take a braille practice toy on the road. Use the box to store extra lids with Velcro for the inevitable loss of dots.



Bang-it-braille

Use a silicone muffin pan and a rubber mallet or toy hammer to play this game. As your child learns the number sequence of braille letters and the actual letters, announce a letter, such as “b” and have the child tap on dots 1 and 2 for “b”.



Build-it-braille

Did you know that Mega Bloks from Mega Brands are the perfect braille building blocks? These blocks are readily available in toy stores and the single and triple blocks can be formed to make an interactive braille cell!



Braille cell made from Mega Bloks with letter “o” displayed.

Fisher-Price

The Stack ‘n Surprise Blocks Musical Croc Block Wagon and the Count and Build Snail Pail (pictured below) from Fisher-Price feature the perfect 6-dot cells for young children. These interactive toys are great for getting little hands on braille early on!



Braille takes on two forms; the two columns and three rows discussed previously, but the six dots can do the “splits” when one writes braille. This arrangement of braille is used for writing braille on a braille keyboard or braille writer.



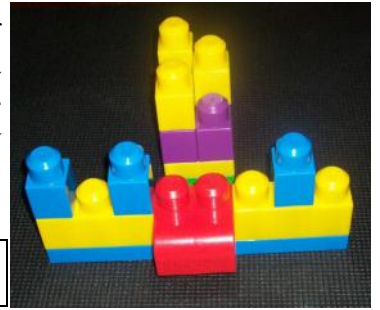
Left index presses dot 1 Left middle presses dot 2 Left ring presses dot 3	Right index presses dot 4 Right middle presses dot 5 Right ring presses dot 6
Thumbs are used for the space bar in the center	



The American Printing House for the Blind (APH) has a fantastic device called the Swing Cell for teaching the concept of the braille cell splitting and has pegs to place in the dots. A couple of parents who have participated in Braille Babies were so fascinated by the use of Mega Blocks as a device similar to APH’s Swing Cell, that they fashioned various hooks to make their own split cell out of these blocks.

Split cell made from Mega Blocks

To use the Mega Blocks cell, make two braille cells and present letters for your child to copy. Also, try constructing an actual braille writer for fun out of Mega Blocks! These activities work best with Mega Bloks and not some of the other interlocking blocks, as the availability of single and triple blocks found in many Mega Block kits yield to making a 6 dot cell.



Braille cell and simulated braille writer made with Mega Blocks

Button-Art-Braille

Buttons make a great tactile way to glue er, Button Art made by Alex Little Hands readily available in toy stores that sell cre comes with a tray perfectly configured to Just remove the printed Button Art tem tually mark the cells. The buttons in the less possibilities for teaching letters for cells. This toy also fosters the growth of



braille letters to a background. Howev- is a fantastic braille cell, button toy ative and developmental toys. The game place 6 full braille cells on the board. plates and place graphic art tape to tac- toy are used as the dots! There are end- children to copy in the other braille fine motor skills.

Braille Sensory and Motor Skills

In addition to being a mode for literacy, braille reading and writing requires fine motor skills, dexterity and strength. Parents who participated in this program frequently expressed concern that their children had difficulties with tactile sensitivity or the motor skills necessary for reading or producing braille. Therefore, these activities were recommended to assist with these concerns.

Sensory Centers:

Parents were encouraged to set up a sensory center in the home and alternate contents periodically. Activities in these centers were designed to help with promoting tactile awareness and pre-reading skills.

Sensory bins

Sensory bins are a tried and true means for getting children to explore tactually. Some of the parents were accustomed to the concept of having children dig through dried rice, beans and sand in sensory bins, but expressed frustration over bugs finding the bins, and the mess incurred through using these bins in doors. Alternative sensory bins were presented in Braille Babies that addressed these concerns and included the use of cotton pom pom balls or silk wedding flower pedals.



Sensory bin filled with cotton craft pom pom balls



Sensory bin filled with artificial, silk flower petals and plastic bees to find

Children using sensory bins are asked to find hidden items in the bin. For example, small rubber ducks in the colorful pom poms or plastic bees made of rubber nestled in the artificial silk flower pedals. Children can play with the contents of the bins to measure, pour, fill, stir and otherwise have a hands-on-learning experience. Parents were encouraged to put containers of various sizes in the sensory bins for this part of the activity.

As a mother, I know children wear through and ruin their clothing rapidly, and as a result, I added the use of fabric to elements of Braille Babies. Use fabrics to make tactile cards for matching and sequencing. Use fabrics from clothing, such as denim, corduroy, silk or terry cloth. Other textures, such as vinyl, burlap, screen (window screens) and any other varied texture can be used. Tactile scrapbooking paper can also be purchased at local craft stores to add texture and for use in the below activities. Several varieties of textures, such as fuzzy, slightly rough and bumpy scrapbook paper can usually be found at retailers with larger scrapbook paper inventory.

There are several options to use fabric and paper textures to encourage children to explore tactually.

- cover otherwise non-tactually discernible surfaces with the fabric to encourage tactile exploration
- make a set of cards to match from two columns; mount the fabrics on solid cards made of solid foam, plastic or wood



- Make same and different tactile games for the child. For example, two denim cards are presented with a third patterned card. The child is asked to identify which cards are the same and which one is different.

Other games and activities can be constructed and placed at the sensory centers in the home. For example, tracking is a skill all children need to learn for reading. Practice tracking sheets can be easily made with Scotch tape placed on construction paper or various ribbon textures can be used as well. The tape or ribbon provides a clear tactile path to follow from the somewhat rough construction paper. Children are encouraged to track left to right to find various items placed on the tracking paths. Parents may place a cracker at the end of each path for the child to find. They may place foam stickers or tactile scrapbooking embellishments on the path and ask the child to count the number of stickers on the line. Parents who enjoyed using this activity with their children came up with many variations of this tracking game on their own as well.



Sample tracking pages with tape and ribbon on construction paper.

Toys encouraging braille concepts:

Parents asked what toys are appropriate for their children who are blind or visually impaired. The good news is a number of toys are readily available that are perfect for children who are blind and are pre-braille learners. Below are examples:

Hungry Hippos: this game requires the child to utilize a lever by pressing on it to make a Hippo eat a marble. One does not need to see the marbles to participate and, if the game is placed on a hollow surface, the sound the marbles make provides auditory feedback. Using this lever to work the Hippo is similar to the process of pushing on the keys of a braille writer. By practicing this skill on the Hungry Hippos Game, the child can work on this fine motor skill in a fun way.



Many parents participating in Braille Babies complained that their children were unable to physically handle the process of pushing on a braille, so parents were encouraged to introduce toys with similar concepts early on in the child's life. Another example of this is the toy pictured below that helps promote the development and strength of the arms, wrist and hand for pushing on the braillewriter.

Xylophones and pianos:

Braille writing on a standard braille keyboard or writer requires good posturing, ergonomic positioning, dexterity of the fingers and coordinated movements of various fingers for different letters. Parents who participated in Braille Babies and had older children offered comments that some of their children had difficulty utilizing the correct fingers for braille. Therefore, parents were encouraged to introduce toys with keys to push early in the child's life. Toy pianos can be used to encourage using each finger in isolation or combination with other fingers. Tape was added to the six keys on one piano to help a specific child tactually discern the keys.



The other piano/xylophone pictured below has keys with more separation between them to encourage finger placement and coordinated pressing.

Parents were encouraged to use these toys with children to also work on posturing. Braille can be very fatiguing to write for many children, so helping them use good posture early on will facilitate a smooth process for when they K. Avila 2005-2012

use the braille writers. Parents were also instructed to ensure the child's feet were planted firmly on the ground or step stool and to utilize angles recommended for optimal positioning.

Potato Head provides an excellent, tactile play experience for children who are blind or visually impaired. Children benefit from learning about putting together parts of the body on the Potato Head, but also, holding some of the parts and finding the correct slot to place the peg is an early





skill for developing slate & stylus writing.

Supporting Tips and Suggestions

Throughout the Braille Babies training programs, parents were provided with suggestions for aiding them in some common issues. Below are the issues and suggestions.

Issue: Braille storage:

Braille can take up a lot of space and access to folders and containers specifically for braille can be costly and usually have to be ordered, especially for larger braille papers that are 11x11.5. To remedy this dilemma, go to your local craft store and purchase inexpensive scrapbook paper holders. These can be frequently purchased for just a couple dollars and come in a variety of styles. Parents can purchase hard cases for scrapbook paper for the items they wish to preserve that their child created with braille on large paper. File folders for this size of paper can be used for organizing materials and blank braille paper and closing pocket paper protectors can be used to transport large braille paper assignments to and from school.



Scrapbook paper holder used as school folder for braille on 11x11 ½ paper.

Issue: Child continues to look visually at materials presented in braille

This is common for children who have useable vision and are learning braille. A number of these children object to wearing a blindfold, so consider placing the materials under a portable stand or bed tray desk so the child's hands and material are covered by the stand. Also, consider using scrapbook paper with busy patterns for braille materials for children who try to read braille visually.

Issue: Materials move around

It is common for materials and supplies children are using to move around, such as the toy pianos other objects. Make certain to have shelf liner handy that has a skid proof texture. This shelf liner is not adhesive and can be placed on surfaces and picked up for later use.

Participants in Braille Babies programs were provided with methods for promoting literacy that are auditory. This included methods to enhance vocabulary development, comprehension, phonemic awareness (letter sounds) and rhyming games. Most of all, parents were encouraged to read to their children, even if braille books were not readily available to them. They were taught how to adapt books with tactile elements and textures from around the house and were provided with resources for obtaining braille and tactile books. Participants were provided with braille practice worksheets to use with children and were given indicators to look for that may signal the child could benefit from occupational therapy to enhance fine motor skills necessary for braille reading and writing. Ultimately, participants were exposed to the fun side of braille that eased their fears of the basics of braille. Moreover, by using toys and easy to manipulate items, parents felt more confident in their ability to interact with their children and in braille activities with developmentally appropriate materials. This alleviated previous fears over braille and facilitated a healthier perspective for encouraging braille literacy with their children.

The Braille Babies program has served as more than a platform for encouraging braille literacy in young children. I would like to thank those who have shared their stories with me that continue to inspire this project and have really enjoyed getting to know families who do so much for their children. Further research and development is currently being pursued on the Braille Babies program. This includes a full curriculum parents can implement with their children with planned, thematic units and scheduled activities for children to do on a daily basis to encourage braille literacy. If you are interested in being part of

research for this program or are interested in attending a Braille Babies seminar, either in person or online, please email me at krwa@verizon.net

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FAMILYCONNECT®

Webinar on Other Useful Technologies for People with Low Vision

Date: 09/27/2012

Many people with low vision find some auditory and some tactile tools useful for certain tasks. Topics covered in the fourth webinar of this series on low vision technology include:

E-book readers – auditory/visual
Cell phones – auditory/visual
Tablets
GPS – auditory/visual
Calculators/dictionaries - auditory/visual

Age Groups

Teenagers
Parents of children with visual impairments
Adults
Seniors

Interest Categories

Technology
Assistive technology/helpful products
Information for professionals in the blindness or low vision fields
Information for professionals who work in other fields
Workshop/presentation

Contact: AFB eLearning

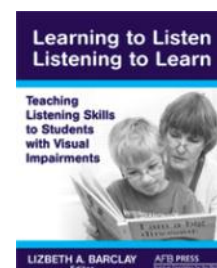
E-Mail: literacy@afb.net

URL: <http://www2.afb.org/store/product.asp?sku=ETECHWEBSERIES>

New and Featured Book

AFB strives to expand possibilities for people with vision loss and the professionals who work with them by publishing timely, targeted information to meet their needs. Through books, DVDs, and electronic materials produced by AFB Press, the Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, AccessWorld®, and other publications, AFB delivers the information resources you need.

1. Learning to Listen/Listening to Learn
2. Edited by Lizbeth Barclay
- 3 Paperback Price: \$59.95
4. Publisher: AFB Press
<http://www2.afb.org/store/default.asp?mscssid=DT3K1XDW50V39JRTMRU2CLMF XW9LBS14>



Announcing the APH Facebook "Like Us" Contest!

Win a \$250 APH Gift Certificate!

Have you "Liked" the APH Facebook page? Like us by midnight, Friday October 12, 2012 and you will be entered in a random drawing for a \$250 APH gift certificate! Everyone who has liked our page by October 12 will be eligible for the drawing, subject to the official rules. Drawing will be held on Saturday, October 13, 2012 during the closing session of APH Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky (although we'd enjoy your participation in the meeting, you do not have to be present to win).

By Liking us on Facebook, you'll get great information about APH products, services, and events, plus you may just win an APH gift certificate!



Parents Can Help Start a Successful School Year With Healthy Vision for Kids

Making Eye Health a Priority is One Way to Help Children See a Brighter Future

CHICAGO (July 20, 2012) – As many kids are gearing up to begin a new school year, Prevent Blindness America wants to encourage parents to add "get my child's eyes checked" to their list of things to do. Having a child's vision tested by an eye care professional can help them towards greater success in the classroom since much of a child's learning is done visually. Some students who have been diagnosed with learning disabilities may simply have a vision problem.

Prevent Blindness America, the nation's oldest volunteer eye health and safety organization, had declared August as Children's Eye Health and Safety Awareness month in an effort to encourage parents to learn about ways they can help protect their child's vision. Parents and caretakers are encouraged to visit www.preventblindness.org for free information on a variety of children's vision health topics including eye conditions and eye safe-

ty.

Many children may not know that they have a problem because they think how they see is how everyone else sees. An eye exam is the ideal way for parents to know if their child has a vision problem. Parents should also watch for the following signs:

What do your child's eyes look like?

- Eyes don't line up—one eye appears crossed or looks outward
- Eyelids are red-rimmed, crusted or swollen
- Eyes are watery or red (inflamed)

How does your child act?

- Rubs eyes a lot
- Closes or covers one eye
- Tilts head or thrusts head forward
- Has trouble reading or doing other close-up work, or holds objects close to eyes to see
- Blinks more than usual or seems cranky when doing close-up work
- Squints eyes or frowns

What does your child say?

- "My eyes are itchy," "my eyes are burning" or "my eyes feel scratchy," "I can't see very well."
- After doing close-up work, your child says "I feel dizzy," "I have a headache" or "I feel sick/nauseous."
- "Everything looks blurry," or "I see double."

For eye conditions such as amblyopia, or "lazy eye," the earlier it is detected and treated, the greater the chance of preventing permanent vision loss. Amblyopia occurs when the brain and the eye are not working together effectively. As the brain develops and receives diminished images from the affected eye, it begins to suppress those images and favor the unaffected eye. If this condition persists without treatment, the weaker eye may become totally ineffective for vision.

In many cases, placing a patch over the unaffected eye is a common form of treatment for amblyopia, with the goal to strengthen the weaker eye over time. But compliance can be challenging for many children and their parents. Prevent Blindness America's Eye Patch Club is a program designed to encourage children to wear their eye patches as prescribed by their doctor. Among other materials, members of the club receive their own special calendar and stickers.

The stickers are placed on the calendar for each day the child wears his or her patch. Once the calendar is complete, the child may send it into Prevent Blindness America to receive a special prize. The Eye Patch Club kit may be purchased for \$12.95 with all proceeds going to Prevent Blindness America's sight-saving programs.

"Helping to protect children's eyes from unnecessary vision loss is what Prevent Blind-

ness America was founded on more than 100 years ago," said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. "We want to work together with parents today to ensure all children are on the path to a lifetime of healthy vision."

For more information on children's eye health and safety, local financial resources for eye care, or to sign up for The Eye Patch Club, please call Prevent Blindness America at (800) 331-2020 or visit preventblindness.org.

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(Continued from page 15) - Free Braille/Print Books Available...

braille. Two hundred copies of each title will be made. The books will be provided free-of-charge to families.

This year's print/braille titles include:

- Old Bear and His Cub
- A Mud Pie for Mother
- My Lucky Day
- Read to Tiger
- Llama Llama Misses Mama

Since the purpose of this program is to promote early literacy in the home, applications should be made by parents or guardians rather than schools. Please help us spread the word.

To read about the application process for the free books [visit the DPIL website](http://www.dpil.org).

IPVI

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**THIS PUBLICATION IS SUPPORTED
(IN PART) BY THE NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION FOR
PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH
VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS (NAPVI)
HILTON/PERKINS
PROGRAM AND (IN PART) FROM A
GRANT FROM THE FAMILY RE-
SOURCE CENTER ON DISABILITIES**



Join **IPVI** or renew your membership today!

The *Illinois Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments* is a state-wide, non-profit organization that enables parents to find information and resources for their children who are blind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities.

Your IPVI membership dues or generous contributions help to support all of our ongoing efforts:

- Regular communications which include: workshops, conferences, training seminars, legislative issues, organizational announcements, products, and advice about raising a child who is visually impaired.
- Offers several \$500 college scholarships each year.
- Publishes a resource catalog which includes anything and everything to do with visual impairment.
- Conducts training and support sessions where parents share experiences and ideas.
- Holds fun outings adapted for children with visual impairments at athletic, cultural, educational, and entertainment settings.
- Represents parents of children with visual impairments at conferences, public hearings, and on committees.

What does IPVI do?

- Promotes and provides information through meetings, correspondence, publications, etc., which will help parents meet the special needs of their children with visual impairments.
- Facilitates the sharing of experiences and concerns in order to provide emotional support and relief from feelings of isolation for parents and their families.
- Creates a climate of opportunity for children who are blind in the home, school, and society.
- Fosters communication and coordination of services among federal, state, and local agencies and organizations involved with providing services to people who are visually impaired.
- Advocates on a statewide level for services to children who are visually impaired and their families.
- Keeps members informed about current proposals and actions which impact on children with visual impairments and their families.

Check one:

Parent/Guardian Membership: \$15 per year.

Child(ren)'s Names: _____

Birthdate(s) of my visually impaired child(ren): _____

My child(ren)'s eye condition: _____

I give my permission to release my name to other parents.

Group/Agency Membership \$50 per year.

Extended Family/Friend Assoc. Membership \$15/year.

Medical Specialist \$50 per year.

Scholarship Fund \$10.00

Donation: \$_____ (tax deductible)

New Membership

Renewal

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (_____) - _____

Email: _____

Please enclose this form along with your payment by check to:

IPVI • P.O.Box 2947 • Naperville, IL 60567-2947

Have questions or need more information?

**Call us at
1-877-411-IPVI (4784)**

**Illinois Association for Parents of
Children with Visual Impairments**
P. O. Box 2947
Naperville, IL 60567-2947

**FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND
or PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**THE TOP LINE... of your address
label indicates whether your dues
are "Paid" or if they are "Due."
Please send your annual dues in
each year.**

IPVI CALENDAR

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| ▶ September 12- October 17 | TCL Tots and Company Music Therapy | Glenview |
| ▶ September 18 | The Chicago Lighthouse: Start the School Year off Right | Chicago |
| ▶ September 24- December 12 | TCLVRC Proudly Presents Cooking Classes with Chef Laura Martinez | Glenview |
| ▶ September 25- November 15 | TCL Preschool Enrichment Program 2012 Fall Session Now Enrolling! | Chicago |
| ▶ September 27 | Webinar on Useful Technologies for People with Low Vision | |
| ▶ October 5-6 | NFB State Convention | Chicago |

Please call
1-877-411-IPVI
for any questions, concerns,
or comments that IPVI can
help you with.

**Newsletter Deadline for
OCTOBER is SEPTEMBER 10th**



**Check Out
www.ipvi.org**

**Calendar of Events!
News and Updates!
Useful Links to Web Sites!
And more...**