

IPVI INSIGHTS

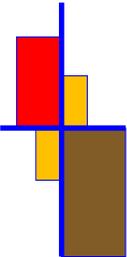


Connecting & Supporting Families Whose Children are Visually Impaired, Including Those with Additional Disabilities

November 2019

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Filiberto Almendarez III



Happy Fall everyone. I hope you enjoyed the "Play for All" by IPVI and the Chicago Lighthouse at the Children's Museum. The museum offers a variety of interactive entertainment for all to participate. I thank the Museum for their assistance and continued support. Also, it's hard to believe our next and final event for 2019 is almost here. The magnificent IPVI and Chicago Lighthouse Christmas Party. I look forward to chatting and celebrating. More information will follow so watch for the future date

Now, that we are in the holiday season and Thanksgiving is approaching, it's a time of togetherness and gratitude. Although challenges may still be present, an attitude of gratitude can bring great things. Appreciate what you have and do not take things for granted, even, if something may seem insignificant. One day the need will make it important. So, celebrate Thanksgiving everyday. For to live a day is a gift, which is why it's called the Present.

Additionally, Thanksgiving has two words, so be thankful and remember to give. As Anne Frank said, "*No one has ever become poor by giving*". Whether, you share by monetary or volunteering your time, just share. I once read how to resolve hunger-Share. So give and when you are really thankful, you might not realize how much you shared.

Enjoy togetherness with Family, Friends and Food. Happy Thanksgiving!

Faith *Family*
Friends
for these we give thanks



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Rachel Wants to Raise White Cane Awareness

Rachel Luehrs describes her journey of acceptance



I received my first white cane in 2011, an event that I was not emotionally ready for. I had been diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa in 2002 and by 2011, I had begun to experience significant vision loss. However, I was still able to function without major accommodations and was unwilling to start to use a white cane. Accepting a white cane meant accepting the fact that I was going blind. I feared that diagnosis. I feared people's reactions. I feared their pity and I feared being a victim.

It took time, encouragement, and maturity, but I now see my white cane with a level of appreciation and understanding. I have come to recognize it for the tool that it is and the in-

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2) - Rachel Luehrs

dependence that it can offer. It is an extension of my arm, a second set of eyes, and a signal to others around me. Locations that had seemed stressful and impossible to face alone are no longer intimidating. With my white cane, I can walk through museums without fear of bumping into small children or exhibits. I can navigate congested airport terminals with less difficulty and face rush hour traffic at the Washington D.C. Metro with greater confidence.

What has been an unexpected challenge in my journey to accepting a white cane has been an overall lack of knowledge about white canes by the American public. Security guards have told me that my “selfie-stick” is too long and is not allowed in the stadium. Pedestrians and fellow commuters have raised eyebrows and stared as I read messages on my phone while holding a white cane, clearly viewing me as a fraud. I have lost count of the number of times people have told me “but you don’t look blind,” or suggested “have you considered getting glasses?” It is clear that perceptions of the visually impaired community are not where they should be.

To start, it is important to recognize that vision impairments operate on a spectrum. Just as someone can have varying degrees of deafness, one can experience varying degrees of blindness. Not everyone’s vision loss will manifest itself the same way. For example, I still have fairly strong central vision at this point in time. I can read street signs, small print, and recognize faces without difficulties. My vision loss is largely relegated to my peripheral and night vision, hence why I need a cane for crowded and dimly lit situations. In comparison, there are individuals with white canes to whom the world is visible but exists as a blur. There are also those who can only see on the periphery and those who live com-

pletely in the dark. Despite these differences, we all might use a white cane at one time or another.

As I sat down to write this I was struck by the question – When exactly did white canes first come into use? I did a bit of research to see what I could find. Canes for the visually impaired have been around since biblical times. However, it was not until the 1920s that the concept of a “white cane” for the visually impaired began. In a movement that originated in Europe, walking canes were painted white so that blind pedestrians would appear more obvious to drivers. In the years following World War II, the concept of the white cane spread and became popular throughout the United States. Under President Lyndon B. Johnson, White Cane Awareness Day was established by an act of Congress to celebrate the achievements of individuals who are blind or visually impaired, as well as recognizing the independence that is offered to them by the white cane.

“...the white cane has given them the freedom to travel independently to their schools and workplaces and to participate more fully in the life of their communities. It reminds us that the only barriers against people with disabilities are discriminatory attitudes and practices that our society has too often placed in their way.”

*President Bill Clinton
White Cane Awareness Day 2000*



THE CHICAGO LIGHTHOUSE AND IPVI

INVITES YOU TO A

**HOLIDAY PARTY FOR THE CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT CENTER
(for children 3-21 yrs.)**

**and the LIGHTHOUSE PRESCHOOL CHILDREN
(3-5 yrs.)**

AT

THE CHICAGO LIGHTHOUSE

1850 W Roosevelt Road

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2019

11:30 a.m.– 2:30 p.m.

FEATURING SANTA CLAUS, IPVI ELVES, HOLIDAY CAROLS ,FOOD,

ARTS/CRAFTS

HOLIDAY PRESENTS

(Thank you IPVI, Lions Clubs & Community Partners)

R.S.V.P.Gail Patterson - 312-997-3695

*Prepared for IPVI INSIGHTS
NOVEMBER 2019*

**CALL FOR BLIND AND VISUALLY
IMPAIRED SWIMMERS**

How proud I am that I have proven that the educators during my high school years were **WRONG!** When I asked them to allow me to participate in P.E. classes, I was told: “NO”. A teacher assistant was assigned to read to me about Physical Fitness. My anger—supported by my mother Erika . Musser—steered me in a different direction. I was lucky that the swim coaches and administrators at the Leaning Tower YMCA (LTY) in Niles, located close to my home, supported me whole-heartily for private swim lessons and swim team participation. They knew me since age three, when their Conqueror’s Swim Program welcomed my participation as a totally blind child. They were way ahead of the thinking of “trained” educators!

Over the last two years, I have tremendously enjoyed training with the Swedish Fish Team members, who hold coached pool swim sessions on the Northside of Chicago at Galter Life Center, Northside Prep High School and Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) and during the summer month in Lake Michigan at various beaches. I feel integrated, wanted and loved!

The photos below were taken at the swim start of the 2.5 kilometer Big Shoulders Open Water Swim at Ohio Street Beach, September 7, 2019. There were only two “special needs” swimmers among 1200 signed-up swimmers; Tina Oakes, a one-leg amputee, and myself. Since the water was choppy and cold (about 62 degrees Fahrenheit), both of my coaches, Billy Cordero and Andy Holck, decided to swim with me for safety—one on each side without tether.

Dear IPVI Parents,

Please contact me if you would like your blind/visually impaired child get involved in swimming, no matter what age. I will try to find a solution to the child’s unique needs.

I could not imagine life without swimming—one week without swimming would be a disaster for me. Besides swimming, what else keeps my busy and happy? Pursuing classical piano playing and teaching Suzuki Piano lessons.

HAPPY THANSGIVING TO ALL!

* * *

F. Heidi Musser
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Every year I send out pictures and short information about them for Christmas gifts.

This year I decided to consult the website and found a various amount of places to go and see for yourself some ideas for the blind and visually impaired.

My search was entitled "Christmas toys for children who are blind or visually impaired for ages 1-15."

Most are from organizations for Blind/VI children, but I suggest you also go to Wonder Baby for they have a very good list.

I hope this is helpful and you find some ideas for your children.



FAMILYCONNECT



YOU LOOK TIRED

By Emily Coleman

If you're the parent of a child with special needs, you've likely heard the statement "You look tired" many times. Maybe it's at the end of the work day, or perhaps right when you walk through the door. Although you may have received the best night of sleep in weeks, you still can come across as a person who is chronically tired.

This winter, we spent a total of fourteen nights in a hospital over the span of five different stays. Due to my son's diagnosis, he has medication complications that have rarely caused him to be hospitalized until now. I had forgotten what a couple sleepless nights in a row can do to a person. We were bringing "you look tired" to a whole new level.

Now that our hospital days seem behind us (for now), we have a new enemy of sleep in our house. Bugs. That's right. For those of you familiar with warm Texas nights, you'll know that the cacophony of insect sounds is impressive and apparently abrasive to some. As the seasons began to change and more bugs came to life, Eddie decided he wasn't going to sleep with them making a racket outside his window.

He'd plea, "No more bugs!" "Goodnight, bugs!" "See you later, bugs!" After bugs, and then?!?" To which all we could share was an explanation about the insect life and how we wish we could go find one bug and put it out of its misery to solve our problem, but that bugs don't work that way. There is never just one bug. READ MORE AT:

www.familyconnect.org/blog/raising-a-child-who-is-blind-and-you-look-tired/12

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thanksgiving
gather
thankful family
blessed grateful
together
blessings
november





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.
- Holds fun outings adapted for children with visual impairments at 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: \$20 per year.
 Child(ren)'s Names: _____

- 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 \$20/year.
- Medical Specialist \$50 per year.
- 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 316634 • Chicago, IL 60631

**Have questions or need
 more information?**

**Call us at
 1-773-882-1331**

**Illinois Association for Parents of
Children with Visual Impairments
P. O. Box 316634
Chicago, IL 60631**

IPVI CALENDAR

HOLIDAY PARTY

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2019

THE CHICAGO LIGHTHOUSE AND IPVI

Please call
1-773-882-1331
for any questions, concerns,
or comments that IPVI can
help you with.

**Newsletter Deadline for
December 2019 is November 15, 2019**



**Check Out
www.ipvi.org**

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



10 Accessible and Sensory-Friendly Halloween Ideas

For kids who are blind or visually impaired

By Amber Bobnar

Find ideas for Halloween crafts and activities that are accessible for blind or visually impaired kids. We've also got a lot of multi-sensory ideas too! READ MORE at:

<http://www.wonderbaby.org/articles/10-accessible-and-sensory-friendly-halloween-ideas>



Make Your Own Teethy Pumpkin

By Amber Bobnar

Here's a fun and easy halloween pumpkin idea: use vampire teeth and sticky eye balls to make your jack-o-lantern's face! Kids will have fun helping and it's very tactile, too! READ MORE at:

<http://www.wonderbaby.org/articles/teethy-pumpkin>



Make Your Own Simple Jack-O-Lantern

By Amber Bobnar

My favorite jack-o-lantern idea is to stick velcro stickers to the pumpkin and then mix and match felt shapes as the eyes and mouth. It's simple, there's no carving involved and the best part is you can change your design throughout the season! READ MORE at:

<http://www.wonderbaby.org/articles/make-your-own-simple-jack-o-lantern>



Turkey Squash Thanksgiving Project

By Amber Bobnar

If you're tired of carving pumpkins every year, why not spice things up with a decorated squash instead? Find out how to make this silly Turkey Squash with feathers and a crook neck squash. READ MORE at:

<http://www.wonderbaby.org/articles/turkey-squash-craft-project>