

# Independence

*Stories of life transformation made possible by you!*



*From day one at Infant-Family Camp, Camp Bloomfield provided Carolina and her family a lifeline of support.*



*Carolina puts a big smile on her father's face after a fun day at camp.*



*Carolina and her family look forward to camp every year.*

## It's a Family Affair!

When Lorena found out that her daughter Carolina was blind and had multiple disabilities, she and her husband felt very alone.

"It was eighteen years ago and back then, there wasn't a whole lot of information available," explains Lorena.

Lorena was desperate to find answers when she learned about an Infant-Family Camp session that was being held at Junior Blind's Camp Bloomfield.

Thinking back to that first weekend at camp, Lorena says, "It was incredible. Suddenly, I was given a wealth of information—the information I was starving for. And, there were parents, just like my husband and me, who understood what we were going through."

Since then, Lorena and her family have continued to go to Camp Bloomfield every summer.

***"Our Camp Bloomfield sessions are a never-ending source of support for our family," says Lorena. "Our time there brings joy to us all—most definitely to Carolina but also to her sister, Daniela."***

Daniela, Carolina's 15-year-old sister, has been a spirited Camp Bloomfield camper for many years.

"I love coming here with my sister and knowing there is a place where she can do things that bring meaning to her life," says Daniela.

A teen herself, Daniela understands that doing fun things like singing campfire songs, swimming and riding horses brings excitement to an adolescent's life.

But, she also understands how important a sense of belonging is at that age. She knows that it's not just the activities that make a difference in Carolina's life... it's also the encouragement, understanding and love that Camp Bloomfield offers each and every child.

***"When Carolina comes to camp, she is part of something great. Everyone understands and believes in her. And, as her sister, I get to be part of it too," says Daniela.***

Seeing the difference that Camp Bloomfield has made in her family's life has inspired Daniela to pursue a career in working with children with disabilities. In fact, she already has a position in mind ... looking over at Frank Cardenas, Director of Camp Bloomfield, Daniela smiles and says "When I grow up, I want his job!"

# Sharing Our Vision

Every dream begins with the belief in oneself. With your support, our campers learn many valuable lessons at Camp Bloomfield, discovering that even when they face unique challenges, they can overcome any obstacle and achieve their dreams.

It's a tremendously rewarding experience to help give these children the opportunity to exceed their own expectations, and at camp these incredible moments happen every day. For more than fifty years, children attending camp have made new friends, overcome fears and tried things they never thought they could do. In so many ways, Camp Bloomfield has made a positive impact in the lives of thousands of children.

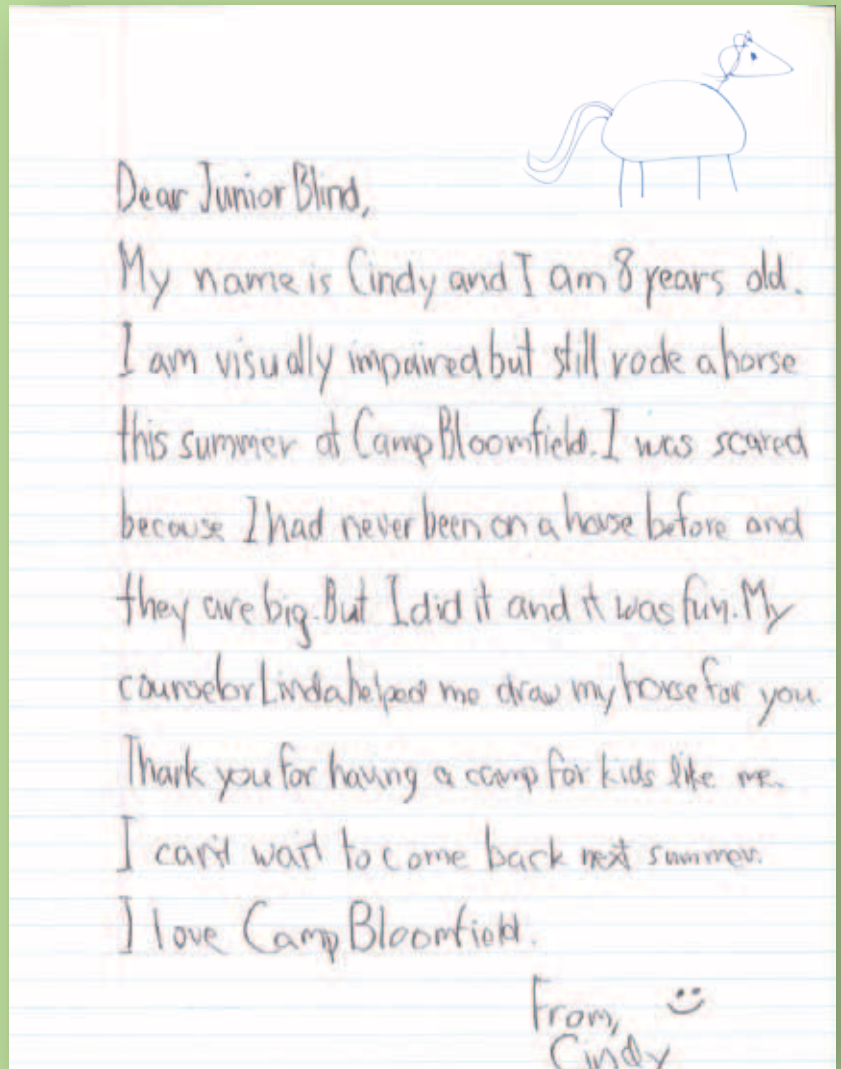
Last summer, Cindy wrote us this letter describing what it was like to ride a horse for the first time. It was just one of the meaningful moments that happen at Camp Bloomfield every day and I wanted to share her letter with you.

Your contributions help hundreds of children make life-changing discoveries each summer at Camp Bloomfield—all at no cost to their families. Our campers gain the confidence and courage they need to break down barriers, gain self-esteem and reach their true potential. Thank you for being part of our campers' accomplishments.

Sincerely,



Miki Jordan  
*President*



# From Your Heart to Their Happiness

By Frank Cardenas, Director of Camp Bloomfield



**As Camp Director, Frank creates a positive and safe environment where campers can grow, learn and try new things.**

What I love about Camp Bloomfield is that we focus on what our kids *can* do. It sounds so simple but, often, talents and abilities are overlooked. It takes an open-hearted individual who genuinely cares about children who are blind, visually impaired or multi-disabled and wants to make a difference in their lives, to see beyond the potential limitations children might experience due to a visual impairment.

*It takes someone like you—* someone who believes that children with disabilities deserve to experience the joys of childhood and that they can achieve great things given the right resources.

With your help, children at Camp Bloomfield are empowered to rise above the barriers they may have thought existed. They learn to swim, ride horses and ascend to the top of a 20-foot climbing wall.

But, that's not all. Maybe most importantly, our campers leave Camp Bloomfield with a renewed sense of self-confidence and increased independence, returning to school empowered to try new things and continue to succeed.

In this newsletter, you read about Alexia and Carolina, two wonderful girls who have benefited thanks to your commitment to Camp Bloomfield. Through these stories, we are reminded that when a child is diagnosed with blindness or any disability, it truly becomes a 'family affair.'

This is why your support is so vitally important to the success of our campers. As you know, Camp Bloomfield provides various week-long sessions for children of all ages who are blind, visually impaired or multi-disabled. However, we also provide sessions for the entire family.

During our family sessions, we offer support groups and activities that are designed to connect parents who can then draw from each other's experiences. Additionally, we offer activities that allow siblings to take an active role in the experience of a disabled family member.

On behalf of all our campers and their family members, I can't thank you enough for your continued support. Because of your generosity, we can offer all of our camp sessions free of charge.

## Amidst Every Challenge, There Is An Opportunity for Success

When five-year-old Alexia first stepped foot onto Camp Bloomfield, she found a sprawling 40-acre campground filled with possibilities. From horseback riding to hiking and archery to arts and crafts, she couldn't wait to try them all.

Diagnosed with optic nerve hypoplasia when she was only three months old, Alexia had no vision in her right eye and could see only lights and shadows—at most—with her left eye.

"I worried that Alexia might have to make compromises...that she might have to choose between a 'blind' world and a 'sighted' world," says Tracey, Alexia's mother.

**"That summer at Camp Bloomfield, I realized that Alexia could live in whatever world she wanted. She might have to make adjustments here and there, but everyone has to make some kind of adjustments in life. Alexia's are just more obvious to others," explains Tracey.**

At Camp Bloomfield, archery is played with a bull's-eye that buzzes, sports games are played with balls that jingle and children who are blind play alongside those who are sighted, working hand-in-hand to achieve a common goal.

Now, at age 13, Alexia is the only visually impaired student in her junior high school, but

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## Amidst Every Challenge, There Is An Opportunity for Success (continued)

that doesn't stop her from getting straight A's and fully participating in gym class.

Through her experiences at Camp Bloomfield, Alexia learned that she can enjoy physical activities alongside her sighted classmates—something she is proud to declare to others.

Just a few months ago, when her gym teacher didn't understand how it was possible for someone to play kickball or run a 50-yard dash without the use of sight, Alexia showed her how sports could be modified so that youth who are blind or visually impaired can participate.

"Everything Alexia has learned at Camp Bloomfield has helped her in her everyday life. Children and teens who are visually impaired need that chance to build confidence and discover their abilities because throughout their lives it will be up to them to show people what they can do, not what they can't," says Tracey.



*At Camp Bloomfield, Alexia can enjoy traditional camp activities despite her visual impairment.*

## Fifty Years of Support – And Beyond

Who would have thought that joining a social club in high school would mark the beginning of a fifty year friendship between a young woman and a charity helping blind children achieve independence? From volunteering in her youth to becoming a donor as an adult to including Junior Blind in her estate plan—Susan Shapiro has come full circle with Junior Blind.

Susan was a student at Fairfax High School in the 1950s, when she was first introduced to Junior Blind, formerly the Foundation for the Junior Blind. Initially, Susan volunteered through a social club at school. She loved it so much that she did it for three years and was even a counselor at Camp Bloomfield.

At the time, Junior Blind was a young organization led by a charismatic leader, Norm Kaplan and his wife Nadia. They had a vision of helping blind children experience all the joys of childhood. Susan remembers them fondly, saying "Everybody loved Norm and Nadia. They were two of the greatest people."

Volunteering at Junior Blind and Camp Bloomfield filled Susan with great personal satisfaction. "It felt good helping blind children achieve things they never thought they could do—especially at camp because it was a safe place to try new things," she recalls. "It made me wonder, if not for Junior Blind or Camp Bloomfield, would these kids ever know their potential?"

As an adult, Susan donated to Junior Blind because she felt it was important to ensure that the organization's critical programs remain available for all children in need.



After retirement, as Susan began putting her affairs in order, she wasn't sure how to protect the equity in her home and still leave a gift for Junior Blind in her will. She found an attorney to help formally document her estate plans—a necessary tool to avoid probate, a process where courts supervise the settlement of an individual's affairs after their passing. "The planning itself was easy," according to Susan because all she had to do was organize her papers and the attorney did the rest.

Susan's estate plan allows her to maintain her income and assets during her lifetime and also leave a significant gift to Junior Blind upon her death.

After a recent visit to our campus, Susan felt validated in her decision to include Junior Blind in her estate plan. As she turned to leave, she confided, "I don't know where the children and families find the courage to go on, but I am comforted in knowing that my gift will help make Junior Blind's services available now and in the future."

**If you would like to include Junior Blind in your estate plan or have questions, please call Bonnie E. Harris, Esq., Director of Gift Planning at (323) 290-6294.**

