

JUNIOR BLIND Perspectives

An Informational Publication from Junior Blind of America

Early Childhood Program Offers Continuing Support for Children Ages Three through Six

Our Mission:
Helping children and adults who are blind, visually impaired or multi-disabled achieve independence.

As the newest addition to Junior Blind of America's Child Development Programs, the Early Childhood Program will offer continuing support and services for children ages three through six who are blind, visually impaired or multi-disabled and their parents.

A natural extension of our existing Infant-Family Program (IFP), which serves infants from birth to age three, the Early Childhood Program is designed to help children successfully transition into the special education public school system and maximize their developmental gains.



The Gonzales family plans next steps for their daughter Lupe's education as part of the Early Childhood Program.

In addition to accompanying parents and families to Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings and optometrist or ophthalmologist visits, Specialists will teach parents how to become the best possible advocates for their children.

"Our Infant-Family Program served 1,485 infants and family members this year — a 12 percent increase," says Jay Allen,

Executive Vice President of Junior Blind. "With the introduction of our new Early Childhood Program, we can ensure these infants and parents continue to receive the care and support they need and deserve."

Closing the gap in services for early childhood education is crucial for parents who are at a loss in terms of how to proceed



Lupe continues to strengthen her skills with her Specialist.

with their child's care and education.

Parents and children will also be offered further assistance through support groups and recreational activities, including picnics in their local areas, family camp at Junior Blind's Camp Bloomfield and invitations to all Junior Blind events.

Junior Blind is honored to introduce this new program which will enhance and advance the education, care and future of our children.



**JUNIOR
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We Stepped into Prevention, Now We're Stepping it Up

Children with uncorrected vision conditions or eye problems may face many barriers in life...academically... socially...and athletically.

High-quality eye care can break down these barriers and help enable our youth to reach their highest potential but unfortunately, 66 percent of children enter school without undergoing any type of vision screening or eye exam.

Since the launch of our Vision Screening Program last spring, Junior Blind has provided comprehensive vision care to more than 1,600 low-income pre- and elementary-school children, free of charge.



Alyah's new glasses give her confidence and the healthy vision she needs to do well in school.

Made possible in-part by the California Community Foundation and supported by Assembly Speaker Karen Bass, Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas and Supervisor Yvonne Burke, Junior Blind's Vision Screening Program offers vision screenings, referrals and transportation for eye examinations, glasses and continued follow-up care.

To date, more than half of the children who have had full eye exams have received glasses.

With the beginning of this new school year, we look forward to serving the thousands of children in our community who are still in need of crucial and comprehensive vision care.

STEP Intern Fires It Up!

Whether you've worked in a restaurant or just eaten in one, I'm sure you can appreciate the level of skill and talent it takes to be a chef.

Working quickly under extreme pressure, pleasing individual tastes and creating culinary masterpieces are just a few of the job requirements.



It's a stressful job but you would never know by watching 19-year-old Marvin Quinoñez.

"I've trained hundreds of chefs and I can honestly say that Marvin is a natural," remarks Julia Hermann, Director of Food Services at Junior Blind.

A participant of Junior Blind's Student Transition & Enrichment Program (STEP), Marvin was given the opportunity to intern in Junior Blind's state-of-the-art industrial-sized kitchen after expressing an interest in cooking.

Showing immediate talent, Marvin quickly became an integral part of the Junior Blind Culinary Team and was asked to extend his internship until the end of the summer.

"He's so focused," says Julia, giving Marvin pointers on how to perfect his chopping technique.

Without the use of his central vision, Marvin intuitively measures each slice of the cucumber, naturally curling his fingers under

before the blade makes contact. He moves so seamlessly, his modified technique easily goes unnoticed, overshadowed by his skill, speed and charming smile.

Things weren't always so easy for Marvin. His vision loss, which he discovered in junior high, took years to diagnose, causing him to fall behind in school. With just one more year before graduation, Marvin knows he is capable of obtaining his high school diploma and so much more.



"I've gained confidence and trust at Junior Blind," says Marvin. "Through my internship I've learned just how much I can do and now I'm motivated to do even more."

While in STEP, Marvin also learned key skills, such as money management, independent travel and interviewing etiquette.

"A key component of STEP is to give young adults the tools to identify and achieve their career and educational goals," says Gina Kegel, Director of Student Transition. "Real-life work experience is one of the many training techniques we offer to help students gain independence and prepare for the adult world."

An adult and a working professional, Marvin has been hired by Keesal, Young & Logan, a prestigious law firm in Long Beach, to assist with catering and special events. From Junior Blind's kitchen to elaborate banquets, Marvin is well on his way to success and independence in the real world.

Junior Blind: The Social Work Training Ground



Junior Blind Interns with Senior Director of Children's Services, Corina Casco (middle).

Junior Blind is proud to offer one of the leading internship programs for Bachelor's and Master's-level scholars who are entering the field of Social Work. Not only does this program help better prepare the next generation of social workers by offering extensive experience and on-the-job training, it also allows Junior Blind to provide additional support services for our students and their families.

Junior Blind works collaboratively with institutions, including University of Southern California, Cal State Dominguez Hills, Long Beach State and Cal State Los Angeles to create a structured curriculum that ensures interns are equipped with quality professional training.

Junior Blind believes that applying concepts and values learned through coursework to real-life situations enables interns to practice skills essential to their professional development and success.

Accordingly, Junior Blind interns take part in a comprehensive program, which is comprised of case management, clinical work, advocacy, field instruction and the completion of a Macro Project, focused on their specific areas of interest and study.

Junior Blind's Senior Director of Children's Services, Corina Casco, M.S.W. oversees the

internship program. "When I first took on the project a little over a year ago, I envisioned it being a critical training ground for professionals to work with the visually impaired and multi-disabled population."



Interns learn about the benefits of using play therapy to overcome developmental challenges.

"During my first year as an intern at Junior Blind, I learned so much that I know I would not have learned had I interned elsewhere. I've had an amazing experience and look forward to this next year," says Connie Sun, USC student.

The first two weeks of the internship serve as an in-depth orientation phase, in which students learn agency policies and procedures, shadow support groups and analyze the caseload for which they will be responsible. From there, interns rotate throughout various departments, gaining an in-depth understanding of the organization.

Junior Blind is pleased to help shape the next generation of professionals caring for our students and their families.

Differences Don't Define or Divide Them

Launched as a pilot program in January, 2008, Junior Blind's After School Enrichment Program integrates visually impaired and sighted elementary-school children—offering unique opportunities for physical fitness and socialization among peers. This on-campus program teaches children the importance of exercise and nutrition through activities such as basketball, running, swimming and cooking. Monthly workshops for participants and their parents reinforce key lessons, focusing on nutrition, diabetes and obesity prevention, and healthy living habits.



"I like playing beep baseball the best because it's a sport everyone can play—if you're blind or if you're sighted." —Julio

Chief among reasons for launching this program is the astounding obesity rate plaguing today's youth, which is even greater for children who are blind and often more sedentary than their sighted peers. Unfortunately, the prevalence of overweight children in our local public schools has increased in recent years, jumping from 18 percent in 1999 to 22 percent in 2003—representing more than one in five children. More specifically, in grades 5, 7 and 9, studies have found that 36 percent of students are overweight.

Junior Blind's After School Enrichment Program provides crucial opportunities for



"At the After School Enrichment Program you learn things that you can't learn at school—we all learn from each other." —Matthew

children who are visually impaired and those who are sighted to learn and practice healthy living skills in an integrated environment. In the process, children overcome the divide of sighted and blind, learning that their differences don't define who they are or what they can achieve.

After a successful pilot period, Junior Blind is currently raising the funds necessary to expand this program and touch even more lives.



"Kids from different schools come and we get to do things like cook, swim and play games. It's lot's of fun!" —Denzley

Families Share Their Appreciation at Junior Blind's Annual Luncheon



Junior Blind's Foster Grandparents

On September 10, 2008, Junior Blind of America held our Annual Luncheon honoring the amazing donors and volunteers who support our students and families.

Sharing their gratitude, Denise and Dave Crawford, parents of Junior Blind student, Josh Crawford, spoke at the event:

“I think every parent wants their child to feel special. And these people have taken these little children, who would have otherwise been invisible, and made them [feel] special,” says Dave.

Eleven-year-old Josh, who is visually impaired and has Down syndrome, first came to Junior Blind in 2006 as a student in our Special Education School and now lives in our Children’s Residential Program.

“Before Josh came to Junior Blind he hadn’t even played on a playground. Now I watch him in Mattel Park and it brings tears to my eyes,” says Denise.

An outdoor sensory playground designed specifically for children who are blind or visually impaired, Mattel Park (opened in 1997) was recently refurbished through a grant from the Mattel Children’s Foundation.

Recognized as Donor of the Year for their monetary and in-kind support, Mattel Children’s

Foundation representatives were touched by the Crawfords’ heartfelt appreciation for Mattel Park, which has enabled critical learning and play opportunities for thousands of children, such as Josh.

The family of four-year-old Andrew Ruiz, a student at Junior Blind’s Special Education School, was also in attendance to express their appreciation.



“I wanted to find a school that was in tune with my son’s educational needs.” — Danielle, Andrew’s mom

Andrew, who suffers from both autism and malformation of the brain, began receiving in-home services from Junior Blind’s Infant-Family Program when he was less than a year old.

“When Andrew turned three, I was petrified,” says Danielle. “I wanted to find a school that was in tune with my son’s educational needs. Since being at Junior Blind, Andrew has progressed beyond our wildest dreams.”

With the support of our dedicated donors and volunteers, Junior Blind provided nearly 956,000 hours of direct service to 8,825 individuals and their families this past year.

Thanks to our families, volunteers and supporters for all you do!

Building on a Strong Foundation of Adult Services

After an accomplished career and seven years of dedicated service as the Director of the Davidson Program for Independence (DPI), Ken Metz bids farewell to Junior Blind. Ken will continue his commitment to improve and advance services for those who are blind or visually impaired through ongoing volunteer work at Junior Blind and his involvement with organizations, such as California Council of the Blind.

Fulfilling the role of Director, Shirley Manning will continue to manage the educational portion of DPI, as well as oversee the success of the entire program, which includes all functions from enrollment to graduation.

Gina Kegel, who oversees Junior Blind's Student Transition & Enrichment Program

(STEP), will also be responsible for providing a rich and active evening and weekend experience for DPI participants in her new role as Director of Student Transition.

As Student Outreach Coordinator, Michael Martinez will be responsible for outreach, development and referrals for Junior Blind's DPI, STEP and Veterans programs. In his position, Mike will work closely with some of Junior Blind's most valued partners, including the Department of Rehabilitation and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to connect Junior Blind's comprehensive rehabilitation and training services with youth and adults who are blind or visually impaired.

Please join us in congratulating our staff on their new endeavors!

Junior Blind Co-Hosts VisionServe Alliance Conference

Junior Blind of America is pleased to co-host the VisionServe Alliance 2008 Fall Conference, an event that unites national providers of services for people with blindness or visual impairment. VisionServe Alliance, formerly known as National Council of Private Agencies for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCPABVI), was founded in 1987 to provide a forum for leaders of private agencies and organizations specializing in blindness.



*Junior Blind's President
Miki Jordan*

share best practices on pressing issues, such as education, advocacy, services and professional growth. We are very excited to co-host this event with Braille Institute, Blind Children's Center and Center for the Partially Sighted," says Miki Jordan, President of Junior Blind of America and Board Member of VisionServe Alliance.

Through keynote presentations, brainstorming sessions and networking opportunities, attendees will share ideas and experiences to better enrich the lives of those living with vision loss.

"The VisionServe Alliance Conference offers a unique opportunity for field experts to

SAVE THE DATES!

Tuesday, October 14, 2008

Professional Development Day and Open House

Saturday, October 25, 2008

Halloween Carnival

Saturday, December 6, 2008

Holiday Carnival

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES!

**Junior Blind's Davidson Program for Independence
has volunteer opportunities!!**

Volunteers are needed in our Independent Living Skills classroom to assist instructors with teaching:

- * Meal Preparation
- * Kitchen Management
- * Clothing Management
- * Housekeeping
- * Personal Management
- * Shopping Skills
- * Money Management

For more information, please contact:

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**Please note we request a six month or longer consistent weekly commitment.*

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Sample mailing Address