



Bi-annual Publication of Independence for the Blind of West Florida, Inc.

Serving Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay, Holmes, Gulf, Jackson, Washington, & Calhoun Counties

Message from Executive Director Russell M. Rieder

Spring is here and after the cold winter I think I speak for all in saying “welcome warm weather!”. With the new season, Independence for the Blind has seen many changes. In July 2009, we moved into our new learning center off Davis Highway. We recently received several grants in technology, public awareness, and job readiness thanks to the Division of Blind Services. These grants will allow us to develop a world-class computer lab, increase awareness of visual impairments and the services we provide, and create a program to prepare clients for employment opportunities. The staff has been hard at work training and educating students at the CW Gemmill Learning Center. The learning center has become a busy place training students in the culinary arts, adaptive technology, Braille and daily living skills. I have never met Mr. Gemmill but I believe he would be impressed with all that is taking place. I would like to offer an open invitation to anyone who would like a tour, please contact us at 477-2663.

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Students learn daily living skills at new center

by John O'Dillon, CVRT

We are wrapping-up our very first Daily Living Skills class in our new facility at Independence for the Blind and we are ecstatic with how well it has gone. Having taught cooking in the old rental facility in a kitchen no larger than some walk-in closets, we thought we had died and gone to heaven. For anyone who has not toured the new facility, we have a huge kitchen with a long island in the middle—great for lots of chopping and dicing. Surrounding the island with a wide walk in-between, there are three complete cooking stations. We can now offer truly effective group instruction in the kitchen, and have had eight clients working together at the same time! So far, we have prepared some really delicious lunches to include home-made chili, quesadillas, corn beef and cabbage and pepper steak. The important thing is that some students that need to learn to perform domestic skills are learning valuable lessons about getting around in the kitchen, household cleaning and living independently in general. Our next class starts very soon!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Interested in driving clients to and from the C.W. Gemmill Learning Center for classes? IB West is in desperate need of volunteer drivers who can transport clients living in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. Please visit our website for a volunteer application, or contact Alicia Hefty for more information at 850-477-2663 or alicia@ibwest.org.



Get the “A State Of Vision” tag when you renew your registration to help support our programs in Northwest Florida!

Gulf Islands National Seashore Wins Award for Accessibility



Gulf Islands National Seashore was awarded the 2009 National Design Project Accessibility Achievement Award from the National Park Services. The award is for exhibits in the Naval Live Oaks Visitor's Center located in Gulf Breeze. According to Chief of Interpretation Gail Bishop, after Hurricane Katrina and Ivan destroyed the facilities, they had to redevelop all museums exhibits. Extreme care was taken to ensure that everything was tactile and accessible, and longtime park employees Edward and Edison Woods offered their input. Edward and Edison are brothers who have both been visually impaired since birth. Edward has worked at Gulf Islands National Seashore since 1980, and Edison has worked there since 1992.

Independence for the Blind congratulates Gulf Islands National Seashore for their hard work creating accessible exhibits and displays!

2010 Transition Program

Our Transition Program has been very busy this year. The participants, all between the ages of 13 and 22, are encouraged to attend monthly activities with their peers. The goals are to improve their socialization skills, self-esteem and prepare them for adulthood. While all the activities are FUN; they are also educational.



Below are a few of the activities the students have done in 2010:



- Roving job fair in Pensacola to learn how to turn your passion into a career. The group visited Waterboyz, Belle Ame Bath and Body, Angel's Garden, and City Grocery;
- Various thrift stores in Ft. Walton Beach to learn about budgeting your money to shop for affordable work clothes;
- Toured the Marianna Caverns and learned about working in the State Park System;
- Visited Gulf World Marine Park in Panama City Beach and learned about working with animals. The students were able to pet snakes, iguanas, birds, a 600 pound Sea Lion, and dolphins.

AGENCY ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Independence for the Blind welcomes two new board members: **Gayle Crume** and **Walter "Bruce" Watson**.



CRUME



WATSON

Two Independence for the Blind instructors have received their certification from the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals:

- **Hulrick Baptist** is a Certified Orientation and Mobility Instructor.
- **Annelly Rose** is a Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist.

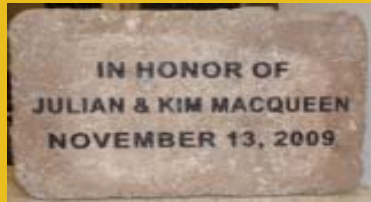
Congratulations Hulrick and Annelly!

Volunteer Spotlight: **Shante Newton-Meyer**



Shante' Newton-Meyer was born in Hampton, Virginia to Robert and June Newton. Both of her parents served in the U.S Air Force. She graduated from Fort Walton Beach High School and Okaloosa Walton Community College with her diploma and A.A. degree in 2002. She later received her B.S. in Pre-professional Biology and is

now pursuing her Masters Degree in Public Health. Shante began volunteering at Independence for the Blind in September 2009, and has thoroughly enjoyed helping our clients. Shante has assisted with client referrals, instructor reporting, entering data into an online database, and fundraising activities. Thank you Shante for all your hard work!



Honor a family member with a \$50 brick in Jean's Garden

2010 Eye Ball raised over \$20,000



2010 Dancing with our Stars winner Sheila Martin

More than \$20,000 was raised Saturday March 6 at the 8th annual Eye Ball, a fundraiser held at the Hilton Pensacola Beach Gulf Front that funds educational programs for the blind and visually impaired persons of all ages throughout ten counties in Northwest Florida.

Comedian **T. Bubba Bechtol** emceed the event and encouraged the crowd to bid on the wide variety of auction items donated by businesses and individuals throughout the United States.

The main event of the evening was the "Dancing with our Stars" competition. The crowd cheered on Center Stage Ballroom professional dancers who partnered with local "stars" **Bill Dagnall**, Lead Business Account Officer with Navy Federal Credit Union; **Kim MacQueen**, local philanthropist; **Shiela Martin**, Studer Group Speaker's Bureau Division; and **David Tuyo**; Executive VP and CFO with Pen Air Federal Credit Union. Each team rehearsed their routines for several weeks. Judges **Malcolm Ballinger**; owner of Ballinger Publishing; **Donna Clark** (winner of the 2009 Eye Ball), local philanthropist; **Kevin Doyle**, Publisher of the Pensacola News Journal; and Escambia County **Sheriff David Morgan** scored and commented on each performance. Sheila Martin and her partner won the competition after wowing the judges and the crowd with their own version of the "Jitterbug".

Please visit our website at www.ibwest.org for more Eye Ball pictures!



David Tuyo



Kim MacQueen



Bill Dagnall

Client Spotlight: Johnny Rueben

I lost my vision completely in December 2008. All I can see is light. Lance Bonner and Hulrick Baptist have been working with me since July 2009. I am very pleased with my instructors and I feel very confident from what they have taught me. Mr. Lance is teaching me how to use a talking machine and the benefits of using bump dots. In my kitchen, the bump dots have helped me be able to heat water on the stove and use my microwave. Mr. Lance also showed me how to label my telephone using bump dots. Mr. Rick is showing me a way to hold my left arm by my head and use my right hand to keep me from running in to anything. Before this, I was just walking with both arms straight out, which wasn't good because I could bump into corners and hurt myself. Mr. Rick is teaching me how to walk with my cane. I would tell someone who is losing their vision, never feel sorry for yourself. Just take that sight you do have and pray to God. But don't give up. And if you do lose all your sight, just keep doing the best that you can and Independence for the Blind can help you use what vision you have left. I thank God number one, and I thank Independence for the Blind number two because I appreciate what they are doing for me.

We would like to thank the 2010 Eye Ball Sponsors:

Retina

- Cat Country 98.7
- Hilton Pensacola Beach Gulf Front
- Innisfree Hotels

Lens

- Center Stage Ballroom

Cornea

- Escambia County Sheriff's Office
- Eye Institute at Medical Center Clinic
- Sandy Sansing Foundation

Iris

- Ballinger Publishing
- Baptist Healthcare Foundation
- Beach Community Bank
- Designs by Diva
- Jeweler's Trade Shop
- Navy Federal Credit Union
- Panhandle Vision Institute
- Pen Air Federal Credit Union
- Pensacola News Journal
- Performance Machining Services, Inc.
- Sight & Sun Eyeworks
- Walter Limbach & Joan Engel



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Angels on the Beach Getaway

Would you love to watch the Blue Angels Show July 10, 2010 from the comfort of your hotel room balcony?



For a \$5 ticket enter a raffle for the chance to win a three night stay at the Hilton Pensacola Beach Gulf Front, as well as a gift basket including dinner packages and other goodies.

This year a 2nd prize winner will be chosen. The winner will receive a beautiful original oil painting by local artist Quenby-*The Blind Saxophonist.*



The Blind Saxophonist

All proceeds fund the services we provide at no charge to our clients.

Please visit our website at www.ibwest.org or contact Alicia Hefty at 850-477-2663 or alicia@ibwest.org for more information.

2010 Summer Transition

The 2010 Summer Transition Program is less than a month away!

This year the students will be traveling to North Carolina from June 13 until June 27. The theme this year is “**Exploring the Great Outdoors-Land, Water, and Air-How do we get there?**” The group will visit Atlanta to tour the airport, ride the Smokey Mountain Railroad, visit Cherokee, go white water rafting, and visit local professionals to learn about planning your career path.

Past Summer Transition Programs



2007



2008



2009

Contact Leigh Hoskins for more information at 477-2663 or leigh@ibwest.org.