



Shawn and Sofeya on the sled.



Haley hugging a little white puppy.

Linda, Kolby and Rebecca on the sled.



Arielle petting two of the sled dogs who are harnessed up and ready to go.



Cheryl, Jess and Arielle on the sled. Cheryl has her arms outstretched with a huge smile on her face.

Training and adventure in the Kootenays

Did you know that Blind Beginnings will travel to your community to offer workshops? In February, we partnered with Project Adventure and offered a Creating Confidence Workshop in Salmo, in combination with dog sledding, a self-defense workshop, and goalball for eleven children and youth from various communities in the Kootenays. Over a three-day workshop, participants learned: what nonverbal communication says about you, tips to improve body image, how to put people at ease about blindness, and how to build positive self-esteem and self-acceptance. At the end of the workshop, all participants made a short presentation about themselves and their visual impairment, incorporating what was covered in the workshop. Pairing this workshop with the dog sledding, self-defense and goalball was an excellent combination of learning and fun! This adventure would not have been possible without the support of the Vision Teachers in the Kootenays: Sofeya Devji and Cheryl Knipe.



Participants and Vision teachers at Creating Confidence workshop in Salmo, BC.

While in the Kootenays, we also offered the Blindness 101 Workshop to thirty-five individuals in Cranbrook. This workshop provides participants with an introduction to the basics of blindness including: introduction to the Blind Beginnings 'no-limits' philosophy, braille, assistive technology, orientation and mobility, exploration and self-directed discovery, echolocation, and an overview of the resources and services available to children who are blind or visually impaired.

For a complete listing of Blind Beginnings workshops, visit www.blindbeginnings.ca. If you are interested in bringing a workshop to your community, please contact the office at 604.434.7243 or email: shawn@blindbeginnings.ca.



Shawn and volunteer Amanda Simpson help kids participate in Easter egg relay race.

Junior Explorer's Club is going strong!

Since October 2010, the Junior Explorer's Club has been meeting on the first Saturday of the month in New Westminster.

Children who are blind or visually impaired and their sighted siblings have been exploring and experiencing a wide range of activities including games, soccer, relays, yoga, music, crafts, decorating cookies, science experiments, and story time.

This month, the children potted sunflowers and participated in an accessible Easter egg hunt, complete with clues in braille. The club will continue to meet the first Saturday of the month in May and June, but will take a break over the summer months. If you would like to receive monthly updates about this club, visit www.blindbeginnings.ca and join our mailing list.

There are many individuals we would like to thank for their continued commitment and participation in this program. A big thanks to Mike Lonergan and Susan Flanagan from BC Blind Sports, Mike Marsolais and the New Westminster School Board for the use of their facility, and our fabulous and dedicated volunteers Adam Wilton, Terri Rockwell, and Amanda Simpson. Without all of you, this program would not be possible!

Blind Beginnings would like to expand the Junior Explorer's Club to communities outside the Lower Mainland. If you have ideas about how to bring it to your community, please contact the office at 604.434.7243 or via email: shawn@blindbeginnings.ca.

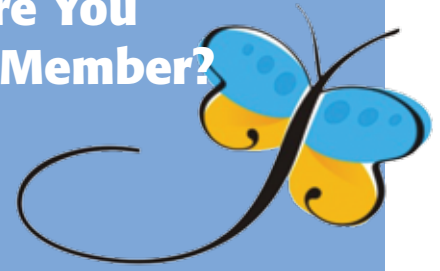


Volunteer Adam Wilton and William holding an Easter egg foamy between his legs.



Volunteer Amanda Simpson and kids having fun carrying foamy-substitute Easter eggs.

Are You a Member?



Annual membership with Blind Beginnings is just \$10 per year for an individual, \$15 for a professional or \$25 for a family.

You must be a member to take part in all of our programs, vote at our AGM and be covered by our insurance plan.

If you are already a member, be sure your membership is up-to-date to continue receiving our membership benefits.

Visit www.blindbeginnings.ca to register or renew.



Have you visited our website lately?

We have continued our efforts to expand and improve the Blind Beginnings website.

Here's just a few of the useful features you can find on our site:

- News and Events announcements
- Membership registration and renewal
- Full program descriptions and easy online registration
- Donate to support Blind Beginnings programs and activities
- Sign up for mailing list

Visit often:
www.blindbeginnings.ca

Name Our Newsletter Contest

Thanks to all who submitted naming suggestions for our newsletter.

Finally, we have made a decision. As you can see, the winner is "Connections". This name was suggested by two parents on our Board: Lisa Sekhon and Bridie Cotter.

Upcoming Workshops for Youth & Parents

Blind Beginnings and Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children invite you to participate in two exciting workshops!

What Happens After Grad Workshop

For teens 15-19 years who are blind or visually impaired.

Topics for teens in the What Happens After Grad Workshop include:

- Career Exploration - Limitless employment possibilities
- Applying for a Job – Research and Resumes
- Importance of Networking – Cold calling and information interviews
- Preparing for the Job Interview – How and when to disclose a disability
- Workplace Accommodations – Assistive Technology and Funding

The teen group will be facilitated by Shawn Marsolais and Liz Charyna. Both Shawn and Liz have significant experience working with young people who are blind or visually impaired in their transition to employment. "We are excited to assist your teens in reaching their potential!"

Preparing for the Journey to Adulthood

For parents of teens 13 –19 years who are blind or visually impaired.

Topics for parents in Preparing for the Journey to Adulthood include:

- Steps Toward Independent Living
- Learning to Let Go
- Helping to Foster New Friendships
- Mentoring and Career Exploration
- Topics Identified by the Group

This workshop will be facilitated by Karen Hodge, Social Worker, and Janet Waines, Nurse Clinician, with the Visual Impairment Program at Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children.

"We recognize that this is both an exciting and worrisome time of many changes in families' lives. Together we hope to be able to connect with each other and to share information and resources."





The workshops will run simultaneously at Sunny Hill—teens will participate in the What Happens After Grad Workshop while parents attend Preparing for the Journey to Adulthood. If you are unable to attend with your parent or teen, you are very welcome to come on your own.

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Upcoming Workshops for Youth & Parents (cont...)

Where: Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children - main entrance at 3644 Slocan St., Vancouver Tel: 604.453.8300

When: Thursday evenings - 6:30 - 8:00 pm

-  Session 1: Thursday, April 21
-  Session 2: Thursday, April 28
-  Session 3: Thursday, May 5
-  Session 4: Thursday, May 19

Note: There will be no workshops on Thursday, May 12

To register for either workshop, contact Shawn Marsolais no later than Monday, April 18th.

Phone: 604.434.7243 or email: shawn@blindbeginnings.ca

When you register for either workshop, please include:

- child's name and age
- parent's name, phone number and email

Summer Opportunities you won't want to miss!

CNIB SCORE Program July/August, 2011

This summer, CNIB is running their SCORE 4 program, which is specifically designed for students attending their last two years of high school with an interest in pursuing post secondary studies. This two-week program assists young adults in building confidence and skills, along with leadership opportunities and work experiences. SCORE 4 will take place July 24–August 6, 2011. Application forms and more information can be found at: www.cnib.ca/en/services/vision-support/summer-programs/score/

In addition to its SCORE 4 program, CNIB has a new program for students in grades 7 through 10. The new SCORE 3 program is an intensive rehabilitation program with a focus on personal management, social competence, play and leisure. It encourages healthy, active lifestyles, along with setting personal goals and planning for a successful future.

Participants in this program will work with skilled professionals in an overnight camp environment. In addition to traditional camp activities, there will be team-building challenges, personal reflection exercises and social skill development opportunities. SCORE 3 will run July 17–23 at the CNIB Lake Joseph Centre in Mac Tier, Ontario. All expenses are covered for students, including meals, accommodation and travel expenses.

There are limited spaces available and all applications are due before April 16, 2011.

Attention all Youth Leaders!



We are looking for three Youth Leaders to volunteer during the Summer Family Adventure Camp. You will each have responsibilities throughout the weekend but will also have an opportunity to participate in the recreational activities.

Your role is to mentor and assist the younger children as they participate in each activity, while being available to answer questions and share your life experience with the campers and their families.

If you are interested in one of these three positions, please send an email to: shawn@blindbeginnings.ca, include a letter outlining why you are interested in the position and what you feel you will bring to this role.

Letters must be received no later than Tuesday, April 26th.

We look forward to camping with you this summer!

Camp Hornby July 21 – 25, 2011

Camp Hornby takes place for one week every summer and is organized by the Camp Hornby Society in conjunction with The Tribune Bay Outdoor Education Centre.

The camp takes place on Hornby Island, BC, the most beautiful of BC's famous Gulf Islands.

This integrated camp is open to all BC children who are blind, visually impaired or deaf/blind, and their families. Campers can come on their own or accompanied by parents, guardians, and/or other family members.

Activities include: climbing wall, leap of faith, high ropes, kayaking, swimming, games, music, campfire, and sandcastles. For more information or to download a registration form, send an email to: jmmason@telus.net or visit their website: www.camphornby.org



Summer camps are great fun and educational too.

CNIB Summer Camp July 10 – 16, 2011

CNIB Summer Camp for Children & Youth who are Blind or Partially Sighted

Held in partnership with the Zajac Ranch for Children and BC Blind Sports

Application Deadline – May 27, 2011

CNIB is announcing its first summer camp at Zajac Ranch for Children, which will bring together children and youth who are blind or partially sighted, ages 8-18, from all over BC and western Canada.

Staff from CNIB and BC Blind Sports will join the staff of Zajac Ranch to design and run a program that includes all campers and encourages independence and builds confidence. Campers will enjoy water sports, outdoor adventures, horseback riding, arts and crafts, archery and much more!

For more information about Zajac Ranch and to download the CNIB Summer Camp application form, visit: www.zajacranch.com

Make friends, be active, be creative and have fun!

For more information about the CNIB Summer Camp, please contact:

Mary Kay Kennedy

Email: marykay.kennedy@cnib.ca

T: 250.519.1102

Toll free: 1.800.563.2642 (Monday to Friday 6:30am to 3pm)

Sarah McCullough

Email: sarah.mccullough@cnib.ca

T: 604.431.2050

Blind Beginnings is excited to announce our first Summer Family Adventure Camp



August 25-28, 2011

After two years of coordinating camps for CNIB, we are now ready and excited to host our very own Summer Family Adventure Camp. We have reserved space at the Dryden Creek Campground in Squamish for Thursday, August 25th through Sunday, August 28th.

What to expect:

- exciting adventure activities, including rock climbing, kayaking, hiking, and more...
- camping instruction and training, including pitching a tent, cooking in the outdoors, and orienteering
- opportunities for families to meet, establish friendships, and have fun together!

Since this is our first time coordinating a family camping weekend, we are going to start small.

We have reserved space for up to seven families. Registration will begin on Monday, April 18th at 9:00 am.

If you would like to attend, please call the office at: 604.434.7243 or toll free 1.866.736.8620 or send an email to: shawn@blindbeginnings.ca.

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Summer Family Adventure Camp (cont...)

Please include your children's names and ages, as well as your name and contact information. You will be contacted within 24 hours to confirm your spot and with details on how to register.

There is no cost to participants, although you will be expected to bring your own camping equipment and food. One communal meal per day will be provided.

Note: Your family must be a member of Blind Beginnings in order to attend this camp.

Calling all Volunteers!

Volunteers are essential to Blind Beginnings. There are many ways you can help us to achieve our vision of a world where children and youth who are blind or visually impaired reach their full potential.

Volunteer Positions

Chaperones

- required occasionally throughout the year during children or youth workshops and training programs. For example, our Youth Leadership Network consists of a three-day training workshop where youth stay in a hotel. Chaperones are needed during the day to assist youth at mealtimes and overnight at the hotel.

Junior Explorer's Club Volunteers

- assist with this monthly club for blind and visually impaired children and their sighted siblings that meets the first Saturday of every month from 10:00 am to noon in New Westminster. Club volunteers should be energetic, enthusiastic, friendly, outgoing, creative, and enjoy children. First Aid training and abilities in sports, music, and crafts are an asset.

Office Volunteers

- assist with the day-to-day operation of the organization. Duties may include: answering the phone, filing, booking flights, ordering supplies, processing registrations, notetaking, research, bookkeeping, etc. Office Volunteers are required on a weekly basis.

Special Event Volunteers

- assist with fundraisers and events that take place periodically throughout the year. Duties may include: providing information, selling T-shirts, requesting and/or picking up auction items, washing cars, assembling media packages, making phone calls, etc.

Board Members

- are leadership volunteers who are members of Blind Beginnings Society. A minimum of 60 percent of our Board must be blind or visually impaired or be a family member of a child/youth who is blind or visually impaired. It is expected that Board members attend a 2-hour meeting once a month and be willing to do 1-3 additional hours of work between meetings. Expertise in fundraising, event planning, accounting, public relations, marketing, human resources, or communications is an asset.

If you are interested in volunteering with Blind Beginnings, please visit our website: www.blindbeginnings.ca, click on Volunteer and complete the online Volunteer Application Form.



Tell Us What You Think

We want this newsletter to be a valuable resource for everyone so we're looking for input.

What would you like to see?

What about articles on different eye conditions? Or how about a column for you to send in questions you just can't find an answer for and we'll try and find someone who can answer them.

How is the layout and the font size working for you? Please let us know so we can make the newsletter everything you need. Send us an email or give us a call...

Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!

Our donors and sponsors make it possible for us to develop and implement our programs and services for children and families.

We would like to acknowledge those that are supporting our 2011 programs and activities:

\$5,000 – \$9,999

Lohn Foundation
Echolocation Training Workshops

\$2,500 – \$4,999

Edith Lando Foundation
Junior Explorer's Club

Phyliss & Irving Snider Foundation
Junior Explorer's Club

\$500 - \$2,499

F. K. Morrow Foundation
Community Discovery Program

New Westminster School Board
Junior Explorer's Club

Variety - The Children's Charity
Creating Confidence Workshops



Contact Blind Beginnings

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T: 604.434.7243

Toll free: 1.866.736.8620

W: www.blindbeginnings.ca

E: shawn@blindbeginnings.ca

User's Assistive Technology Review

Submitted by Patricia Elgersma

Olympus DS50 Review

Living life as someone who is blind or visually impaired means one is often bombarded by a triage of technological devices that we must learn how to use, not to mention keeping up with the hardware/software as it advances. This technology is meant to make our lives a little easier, or put us on a level playing field with our sighted peers.

As a university student, by far one of the best pieces of technology I have gotten is my DS50 digital voice recorder, made by Olympus. Since receiving it almost three years ago, it has become one of my most valued pieces of technology.

As far as technology goes, the DS50 is definitely cheaper (about \$400) and extremely light compared to most of the technology I currently use (braille display, embosser, scanner). It fits easily into a coat pocket or purse, and weighs about two pounds. It's also easy to use. With minimal instruction, you can be up and running with this digital recorder within five minutes. It comes standard with a case, two triple A batteries, earbuds, a USB cable so you can hook it into your computer and get files off of it, and an external microphone.

On the recorder itself, there is a detachable stereo microphone as well. Another great feature about this recorder is that it has spoken menus. From within these menus, you can access a whole host of settings that you can customize to make the recorder work optimally for you.

I have used my Olympus to record lectures, particularly visual classes, phone numbers when I have no way of writing them down, partner brainstorming sessions for group projects, interviews for my undergraduate thesis, music lessons for future reference, band pieces that I need to learn as I am in a community band—the possibilities are endless.

The Olympus DS50 is an easy-to-use, multi-purpose tool that one shouldn't be without. A thorough review can be found on www.blindcooltech.com. Once there, search on the main page for Olympus DS50 Recorder Review. Once you listen to this review, you will be using your recorder in no time!



Blind Beginnings Annual General Meeting • Sunday, June 26, 2011

The Blind Beginnings 2011 AGM will be held from noon to 2:00pm on Sunday, June 26 in Burnaby. Thanks very much to Marilyn Rushton who has kindly offered the use of her house and yard for this event.

We will start the afternoon with a family barbecue. We are asking each family to bring a salad or dessert to share. The actual AGM will start at 1:30pm. Volunteers will be present for childcare during the meeting.

A call for nominees and formal AGM announcement complete with details will be circulated to members shortly.



Save These Dates

Keep this calendar handy so you won't miss out on anything we've got planned. However, please check our website regularly for news and event announcements. If you need more information, please contact us.

April 2011

16	Deadline to apply to SCORE 3 and 4
18	Deadline to register for What Happens After Grad Workshop and registration open for Summer Family Adventure Camp
21	What Happens After Grad/Preparing for the Journey to Adulthood Workshop: Session 1
26	Deadline to receive Letters of Interest from Youth Leaders for BB Summer Family Adventure Camp
28	What Happens After Grad/Preparing for the Journey to Adulthood Workshop: Session 2

May 2011

5	What Happens After Grad/Preparing for the Journey to Adulthood Workshop: Session 3
7	Junior Explorer's Club
19	What Happens After Grad/Preparing for the Journey to Adulthood Workshop: Final Session

June 2011

4	Junior Explorer's Club
5	Youth Community Discovery – <i>Hairspray</i> , Arts Club Theatre
26	Blind Beginnings Annual General Meeting

July 2011

10 – 16	CNIB Summer Camp at Zajac Ranch
17 – 23	CNIB SCORE 3
21 – 25	Camp Hornby
July 24 – Aug 6	CNIB SCORE 4

August 2011

25 – 28	Blind Beginnings Summer Family Adventure Camp
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