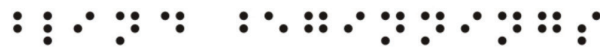


Blind Beginnings



**Helping blind
and visually
impaired youth
reach their
full potential.**

FALL 2010

www.blindbeginnings.ca

Message from the President of the Board

We have the ability to make a professional and compelling case for support...

Peter Mahoney



When Shawn Marsolais first approached me about becoming involved in founding a new non-profit society which would eventually become Blind Beginnings, I immediately said "yes".

At the time, I had very little idea of what was involved in starting a non-profit. Fortunately, we had some excellent advice and guidance and in a relatively short time, Blind Beginnings was a reality. Through the work of dedicated individuals, and most notably Shawn Marsolais, I can proudly say that we are steadily growing in our capacity to truly fulfill our vision.

I've had the opportunity to issue two President's reports, one in 2009 and one in 2010 which outlined in detail all of the accomplishments. I encourage you to read those at some point to get a sense of just how much has happened. However, I want to take this opportunity to tell you a bit about my thoughts on a several issues that we deal with as a Board on a regular basis: partnerships and finances.

One of my convictions in the early days of Blind Beginnings was that we existed to augment the services that exist for children and families, and not to duplicate the services and programs that were already in place. This was important to ensure not only that we were filling gaps in services, but that we wouldn't be competing for existing funds. What I didn't appreciate at

the time was the potential to form partnerships with existing agencies and the benefits that might bring. So, when the CNIB approached us about becoming involved in summer camps at Bowen Island, my initial thought on the matter was that we weren't fulfilling our mission of augmenting services.

However, having been involved in the camps for two seasons now, I can see the value that comes through partnering and how Blind Beginnings can add value to existing services. This was reinforced again recently when we developed a proposal in conjunction with a number of BC-based agencies and professionals for a major funding program. Although we didn't receive the funding for that specific proposal, I believe it has laid the groundwork for future collaboration around some very interested and needed initiatives.

Finances and funding are, of course, a major issue for the Board and our Christmas present last year

[Continued next page..]

Name Our Newsletter CONTEST

Our Newsletter Remains Nameless

Blind Beginnings is still in search of the right name for our newsletter. We are extending our contest until Saturday October 23, 2010. Please send your ideas to shawn@blindbeginnings.ca. The creator of the name that is selected will receive a mention in our next newsletter as well as a Blind Beginnings T-shirt!

was delivered in the form of Bill Smith who has done a fantastic job getting our financial record-keeping and reporting in order, something that is critical for this next phase of our growth. In addition, Kim Jacob's excellent work has been key to helping us raise funds that are allowing us to deliver a number of our programs.

Going forward, I see the biggest challenge is to maintain the funding of our operations which are generally not funded by specific program grants. This has become a major priority for the Board and as such, we are ramping up fundraising activities. For those of you who work with or belong to organizations that regularly hold events or raise funds for specific charities, I would encourage you to help put Blind Beginnings on the radar screen. We have the ability to make a professional and compelling case for support through our printed materials, personal visits and presentations. We just need you to help make the connection.

All that aside, I was reminded this past weekend about what Blind Beginnings is all about. Our family attended the Community Discovery at Confederation Park where Engineer Tom took us for a mini-train ride and gave the kids an opportunity to learn hands-on about the trains. The weather was summery and we had a chance to catch up with other parents and enjoy the afternoon. Our kids thoroughly enjoyed it... thanks to Blind Beginnings!

Peter Moroney
President, Blind Beginnings



(L to R) Nikka, Shawn, Russell, Leanne, (Cody far back), Adam and Owen

Junior Explorer's Club

For children who are blind or visually impaired between 5 and 12, and their sighted siblings

Blind Beginnings, in partnership with BC Blind Sports & Recreation Association, is pleased to announce an exciting new Club for children who are blind or visually impaired!

This Club invites children who are blind or visually impaired and their sighted siblings to meet one Saturday a month. The purpose of the club is to introduce children to a variety of recreational and artistic experiences, teach basic skills related to physical activity, foster the development of friendships, and have fun!

The unique learning and developmental needs of blind children are addressed to help them develop cognitive, social, creative and coordination skills through sports activities, creative arts, music and other recreation activities.

Club meetings will take place the 1st Saturday of the month from 10:00 am to noon. Meetings will be held at:

New Westminister Secondary School,
835 8th St., New Westminister

Activities will be developed for children aged 5 to 12 years of age. Children who are younger than 5 or older than 12 who would enjoy activities for this age group are welcome. All participants must be members of Blind Beginnings. To become a member please visit www.blindbeginnings.ca



(L to R) Shawn, Russell and Nika



Blind Beginnings would like to thank the New Westminister School Board for the use of a gym for Club meetings as well as BC Blind Sports & Recreation Association for their involvement in this program.

We look forward to meeting some new Junior Explorers!

Parent-to-Parent Support Program

For parents of children/youth who are blind or visually impaired across BC

Blind Beginnings is excited to announce the launch of our Parent-to-Parent Support Program October 15–17, 2010!

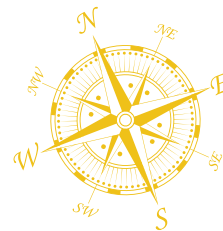
Blind Beginnings will train experienced parents of children who are blind or visually impaired to be Support Parents to parents who are new to parenting a blind child. Through a no-cost, three-day workshop, experienced parents will be trained in basic empathy and active listening, advocacy, workshop and support group facilitation, presentation skills, and an overview of current services and resources available to children who are blind and their families.

Once trained, Support Parents will be paired with new parents across the province in order to provide on-going peer support to parents as they strive to ensure their children reach their full potential.

Thanks to the generosity of the Chris Spencer Foundation and the Toscan Casale Foundation, this training workshop is being offered at no cost to participants. Meals, accommodations, and transportation will also be covered for participants both in and outside of the Metro-Vancouver area.

To register for this informative training workshop please visit www.blindbeginnings.ca to complete the on-line registration form. Once your registration has been received you will be contacted with more information about the workshop as well as details about your travel and accommodations.

Space is limited—so register now!



Community Discovery Outings

For families of children of all ages

Our Community Discovery program has been successfully running in the Metro-Vancouver area for two years now.

Families have visited; Burnaby Fire Hall, Aldor Acres in Langley, Willingdon Church Orchestra, day of discovery with Daniel Kish, New Westminster Police Station, and miniature trains at Confederation Park.

This program provides children who are blind or visually impaired opportunities to have hands on experiences in order to increase their understanding of concepts that are typically understood through vision.

The plan for our next Community Discovery outing is to visit the Skytrain depot. We will have an opportunity to check out one of the cars and learn about how the train works. The date for this outing is Sunday, November 21.

If you would like to receive email notifications about Community Discovery outings please visit our website and add your email to our mailing list. For those of you who live outside the Metro Vancouver area, we are hoping to expand this program to include other regions of BC.

Please let us know where you live and what sort of outings you would be interested in.

Are You a Member?

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

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.



CNIB Youth Group

For youth aged 12 to 18 who live in the Metro-Vancouver area

This group of youth who are blind or visually impaired meet once a month to try new activities, learn some basic daily living and independence skills, and create lasting friendships with other youth who are blind or visually impaired. The club meets at CNIB 5055 Joyce St. in Vancouver. New members are always welcome whether you plan to come every month or just once in a while. The tentative dates and activities for the next 6 months are as follows:

Friday October 29 ~ 6:00 – 9:00

- • Halloween Party

Friday November 19 ~ 6:00 – 9:00

- • Rock Climbing

Friday December 17 ~ 6:00 – 9:00

- • Christmas Party

Saturday January 15 ~ Time TBA

- • Cross Country Skiing

Friday February 18 ~ 6:00 – 9:00

- • Games Night

Friday March 18 ~ 6:00 – 9:00

- • Bowling

To receive monthly reminders and details about each CNIB Youth Group meeting please call Shawn at: 604.434.7243 or email: shawn@blindbeginnings.ca and provide your child's name, age and email address or phone number.

Forum for Youth with Disabilities

Western Society for Children is holding a Youth and Young Adult Forum to discuss the extra barriers in life with a disability or learning difference. This six week project will take place on Thursday evenings.

Topics will include:

- Dealing with misconception or stereotypes of disability
- Participation in recreation
- Making friendships
- Getting and keeping a job
- Challenges of daily living

The intent is to report the finding of this forum to decision makers and funders, and to raise awareness of the needs.

The forum is open to young people between the ages of 16 to 25 years, who have a disability. Interested people may invite a friend or relative within the same age range to attend the group and express their own opinion on participation and disability.

Register by email to forum@wsfc.ca. Please include your name, age, gender, disability or connection, address and telephone contact. Also, please indicate which topic most interests you. Space is limited and participants will be selected to ensure that the group will represent all abilities and differing perspectives.

Students may gain Work Experience hours or Leadership Experience in this small-group project. Times are Thursdays from 6:30 to 9:00 pm, from October 21 to November 25. Meetings will be held at Western Society for Children. Please pre-register by October 18th.



Summer youth group ~ (L to R) Jeremy, Onkar, Ryan, Matthew, Alex, Sarah

“Into the Light” Gala Dinner & Auction in benefit of Blind Beginnings

A-Nu Vision Consulting, in collaboration with Blind Beginnings, is holding a gala event with 500 community leaders and influential individuals on December 3, 2010 to raise funds for Blind Beginnings.

Where: Bollywood Banquet Hall Unit 201 8166 128th St. Surrey, BC

Blind Beginnings would like to thank Anu Pala of A-Nu Vision Consulting for the time and effort she has put into creating this event. Anu says: “This event represents the passion and values that I hold dearly. In providing access to essential tools, Blind Beginnings will be making life changes for the people they work with. I have been blind for almost twenty years and recognize the value of positive relationships, pro-activeness and community supports.”

Opening people up to possibilities enables each and every person to become a valuable contributor to society. Our goal is to raise at least \$25,000 this year, which will go to support programs for blind beginnings.” This event promises to be a lot of fun with scrumptious food, excellent entertainment, a silent auction, and dancing. You won’t want to miss out. Tickets are available through the Blind Beginnings office. \$25 for adults and \$10 for children under 12.

If you would like to purchase tickets or you know a company or business that might be interested in sponsoring this worthwhile event, please contact the office: 604-434-7243 or email: shawn@blindbeginnings.ca.

We look forward to seeing you on December 3!

An opportunity for children, youth and adults with disabilities to try cross country skiing and biathlon!

Nordic Racers Para-Nordic Ski Team is hosting this exciting opportunity to try cross country skiing and biathlon. Of 17 Canadian athletes that competed at the 2010 Paralympic Games in cross-country skiing and biathlon, 5 were from the Nordic Racers Para-Nordic Ski Team.

When? Three Sundays in January - January 9th, 16th & 23rd. Exact times to be confirmed, but it will be an all-day event. People do not have to commit to all three days, but we are hoping they will come out for one and enjoy it so much they will want to!

Where? Whistler Olympic Park in the Callaghan Valley, about 15 minutes south of Whistler. Transportation from Vancouver will be provided if required.

What can participants do? Learn how to cross-country ski and do biathlon. We will have biathlon guns available for all disabilities, including Eko rifles for those who are blind or visually impaired. All ski equipment will be available to those who don’t have their own.

Who is welcome? Anyone with a physical disability is welcome to attend, but we also encourage friends and family to join us. This is your opportunity to learn how to guide your visually impaired child or friend.

For more details or to sign up, please email Courtney Knight at: courtneymarieknight@gmail.com



Thank you donors...you're making a difference!

There are many individuals, companies and foundations contribute time and financial resources to help Blind Beginnings offer its many programs and services for the benefit of BC children who are blind or visually impaired and their families.

Every single dollar makes a difference.

Over the past year, here is what Blind Beginnings has accomplished with your support.

🦋 14 children, along with their families, spent a total of 10 hours discovering new concepts about orchestras, farm animals, police stations, fire stations and trains through our Community Discovery Program.

🦋 13 youth participated in the Youth Leadership training weekend (May 2010) where they learned how to mentor younger children and how to develop leadership skills to aid in the transition from school to career.

🦋 8 children and families participated in a FlashSonar Echolocation introductory workshop to learn the basics about self-orientation using a sonar-like technique that allows children to travel safely and independently.

🦋 10 volunteers participated in the Blindness 101 workshop to learn how to work and interact with children who are blind or visually impaired. Topics included 'no limits' philosophy, use of Braille, assistive technology, orientation and mobility, social skill development.

🦋 38 children and youth participated in three CNIB-funded summer camps on Bowen Island: Braille Literacy (8-12 years), Teen/Tech Transition Camp (13-19 years), Creative/Performing Arts Camp (8-14 years). They left with higher confidence to accomplish daily living tasks, new friendships with other youth who are blind or visually impaired, and improved abilities in the use of braille, assistive technology, and creative arts.

We would like to particularly thank those donors that have made commitments over \$1,000 since July 2009.

\$10,000 and above

Ventana Construction
Youth Leadership Network &
Website upgrade

Westminster Savings Credit Union
Youth Leadership Network

\$5,000 – \$9,999

Coast Capital Savings
Youth Leadership Network

Chris Spencer Foundation
Parent to Parent Support Program

Toskan Casale Foundation
Parent to Parent Support Program

\$1,000 - \$4,999

Lohn Foundation
FlashSonar Echolocation Training
Workshops

F.K. Morrow Foundation
Community Discovery Program

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

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.



October 2010

2	Junior Explorer's Club
15 - 17	Parent-to-Parent Support training workshop
22 - 23	BC Vision Teachers Conference : Richmond
29	CNIB Youth Group

November 2010

6	Junior Explorer's Club
19	CNIB Youth Group
21	Community Discovery : Visit to Skytrain

December 2010

3	Into the Light Gala Fundraiser : Surrey
4	Junior Explorer's Club
17	CNIB Youth Group
TBA	Blind Beginnings Christmas Party

Contact Blind Beginnings

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New Westminster, BC V3L 2Z8

T: 604.434.7243

Toll free: 1.866.736.8620

W: www.blindbeginnings.ca

E: shawn@blindbeginnings.ca

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...