



Limitless News

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Calendar of Events

MAY

- 12 – 14 Youth Leadership Weekend 2017
- 17 Getting Together with Technology: New Westminster Group
- 17 Parent 101 Workshop: Learn about 2017 summer programs for children and families

JUNE

- 3 Getting Together with Technology: Vancouver Group
- 4 Do the Grind Blind training: Coquitlam Crunch
- 7 – 9 Kootenay Project Adventure
- 12 Parent Conference: Early Intervention Transition to Kindergarten
- 15 Disability Pride Celebration and March
- 16 Preschool Community Discovery
- 21 Getting Together with Technology: New Westminster Group
- 24 Blind Beginnings AGM and Family BBQ

JULY

- 9 Do the Grind Blind training: Location TBA
- 10 – 14 Advanced Youth Leadership & Life Skills Training
- 20 – 24 Camp Hornby

AUGUST

- 10 Community Discovery Activity: Playland
- 13 Do the Grind Blind training: Location TBA
- 16 Getting Together with Technology: New Westminster Group
- 18 Preschool Community Discovery
- 24 – 27 Family Adventure Camp – Kelowna

SEPTEMBER

- 10 Do the Grind Blind Challenge (Grouse Mountain)

Highlights

Blind Beginnings Gala

The 2017 annual Blind Beginnings Gala proved to be a huge success! We would like to thank the 250 guests, live performers, speakers, and the rest of the volunteers for making this event possible! It was another great evening of live music, dancing, an evening meal, and another reminder of what Blind Beginnings strives to do and how we express and live our no limits philosophy.

With 250 guests and approximate proceeds of \$37,000 raised through our bottle game, live and silent auctions, donations and ticket sales, this year's gala proved to be yet another amazing demonstration of the support we have in the community. Thank you for your continuous support and encouragement, and we look forward to another spectacular event in 2018!

Kamloops Junior Explorer's Club

In November, the Kamloops Junior Explorer's Club got the exciting chance to see a live production of the musical Mamma Mia. Previously, the club visited an art studio to make beautiful sculpting art, went bowling, visited a pumpkin patch, and more. The club is a great way for blind and visually impaired children, as well as their families, to meet others like themselves, and also to have fun.

There has been a lag in the club's activity due to the extreme weather conditions that have been experienced in the interior of BC this winter. However, now that spring is upon us, stay tuned for more information on the next event, which is being planned for May.

Family Community Discovery to the Apple Store

On February 26, 2017, Blind Beginnings members were offered the chance to attend a Community Discovery training session at the Apple Store in Coquitlam Centre. The training session was about the accessibility features built into many Apple products, including iPad and iPhone, and was designed to introduce and explain these accessibility features to those who might benefit from them.

Youth of all ages who might benefit from learning about the Apple features available to people with visual impairments, as well as their family members, were invited to the session. Those who attended learned about how to access and use the settings on an

iPad. They also learned how to use many iPad features, including voiceover and screen magnification, as well as the gestures that are used to control these features.

Attendees also learned about many apps available that are made for users with visual impairments. For example, one of these apps could allow a person to take a picture of an object and the app would then identify the object. Another app that was demonstrated could read text, including books, out loud.

The training session was a great way to introduce those who weren't familiar with Apple products to the many ways in which they can be accessible. And those who already own Apple products learned some new, helpful features.

Coming Up

Come make memories at Camp Hornby

By Jillian Sloan

Camp Hornby is a 5 day long, family oriented camp on Hornby Island, part of the Sunshine Coast. There are many activities such as a rock wall, leap of faith, paddle boarding, camp fires and so much more. There is also free time where you can choose what to do, and the chance to meet and make new friends. One of the great things about the camp is that everyone there is visually impaired, or has a family member who is, so you all can relate in one way or another. I know that, for me, this was one thing that really helped with accepting my vision loss.

The island itself is beautiful with a great beach and a forest with paths that are accessible. The staff is also great at helping out and encouraging you to try new things that you may have never tried before. Hornby is a place where you can feel completely comfortable being blind. It's a place where you can set your own limits and be the only one who gets to choose to push past them.

Personally, my favourite part about Hornby is the independence you feel you've gained once camp is over. I personally felt that I became even more independent than I already was after leaving Hornby. The combination of the incredible staff encouraging independence, everyone being connected to blindness in some way, the chance to set your own limits, and having the freedom to make decisions for yourself was what made Hornby so memorable. I highly recommend attending this camp. The memories you will make will last a lifetime.

Talent Show Auditions

Love performing? Love showcasing your talents? Then the Blind Beginnings Celebration of Talent is the perfect place for you! Have talents but you don't want to be on stage? No problemo! You can still showcase your abilities.

Where: Sapperton Pensioners Hall: 318 Keary St, New Westminster, BC

When: Saturday, November 4, 2017 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm

Blind Beginnings is looking for a diverse range of talents! All styles of talents are welcome. Anything from singing, dancing, martial arts, poetry, to hula hooping!! Non-performing talents are also encouraged. Have paintings or artwork you would like to display? This is your chance. Want to contribute but can't make it in person? Talents can also be shown as videos if participants live outside of the lower mainland. Interested and want to know more? Send an email to talent@blindbeginnings.ca and let us know what you would like to share!

Note: all performers must be members of Blind Beginnings and be blind or partially sighted. Audition dates will be determined soon and auditions can either be in person or through video. Let your family and friends know about the wonderful Blind Beginnings Celebration of Talent and we look forward to seeing the wide range of talents!

Invitation to our Blind Beginnings AGM and Family BBQ/Pot Luck

When: Saturday, June 24, 2017 from 12:00 to 3:00 pm.

Where: 7915 Elwell Street in Burnaby. Thanks very much to Marilyn & Ken Rushton for the use of their home for this event.

The event will begin with a family BBQ/pot luck. Blind Beginnings will provide hamburgers and hot dogs but we ask all families to please bring a dish to share. For example: salads, side dishes, desserts, etc.

The formal meeting will begin at 1:30 pm and volunteers will be present to assist with child-care during the meeting.

If you plan to attend, please RSVP to shawn@blindbeginnings.ca no later than June 19th with the number of people and whether you are coming for the lunch, the meeting, or both.

Only members of Blind Beginnings are able to vote at the AGM. You can become a member or renew your annual membership on our website at www.blindbeginnings.ca. Your membership allows you to vote at our AGM, sit on the Board of Directors,

participate in all Blind Beginnings programs, and be covered under our insurance during your participation in our programs.

Membership is \$10 for an individual, \$15 for a professional, and \$25 for a family. If you aren't sure whether your membership is due, please contact the office at: 604-434-7243 or info@blindbeginnings.ca

We look forward to seeing you on June 24th!

Project Adventure

Project Adventure is a program that brings together students who are blind or visually impaired to participate in recreational adventures. This year, Project Adventure will take place in Kelowna, BC. Students will stay at the UBC Okanagan campus and participate in a wide variety of activities included in the Expanded Core Curriculum. Students will have the opportunity to experience tandem biking, kayaking and a visit to a kangaroo farm. This will be a great opportunity for students to touch the kangaroos and get a sense of what they look like. There will also be time to socialize with others and make lasting friendships.

A Call for Nominees to the Board of Directors

Are you passionate about children who are blind or partially sighted reaching their full potential? Are you forward thinking, reliable, organized, and have great ideas? Do you have some skills in fund development, marketing, media relations, human resources, communications and social media, government relations, or event planning? If so, then we'd love you to join the Blind Beginnings Board of Directors!

Our Board meets nine times per year at our offices in New Westminster. Meetings are from 7:00 to 9:00 pm and are usually the last Wednesday of the month. Board members who live outside the Lower Mainland join the meetings via teleconference. Our expectation is that Board members contribute 3 to 5 hours per month, in addition to attending the monthly meetings.

If you would like to join our Board, please submit a letter of interest stating why you are interested in volunteering in this role. Please also include what skills and qualifications you feel you could contribute to move our Vision and Mission forward. To view our mandate and how our organization is unique, click [here](#). Our bylaws state that a minimum of 60 percent of the Board must be blind or partially sighted, or be a family member of a child or youth who is blind or partially sighted. So, when you submit your application, let us know any connections you have to the blind community.

Our Nominations Committee will review all letters of interest and present a slate of nominees to be elected at the Blind Beginnings AGM on Saturday, June 24, 2017. All letters of interest should be sent to our Executive Director, Shawn Marsolais, at shawn@blindbeginnings.ca no later than Friday, June 16, 2017. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Shawn Marsolais at 604-434-7243 or toll free at: 1-866-736-8620.

Thank you for your interest in Blind Beginnings. We look forward to hearing from you.

Do the Grind Blind

This September, some Blind Beginnings youth and staff will be taking on what might be our biggest challenge yet. We're going to climb the Grouse Grind and we're calling it: "Do the Grind Blind"!

The goal is to get 10 youth who are blind or partially sighted to the top of the Grouse Grind. The Grouse Grind is a 2.9-km (1.8-mile) ascent, with an elevation gain of 853 metres (2,800 feet) and requires you to climb 2,830 steps.

In order to help these hikers prepare for this physically demanding undertaking, we have organized 4 group training sessions designed to introduce youth to different aspects of the Grouse Grind, including endurance, rough terrain, and climbing continuous steps. We would not be able to attempt this venture without a committed group of sighted volunteers who will be providing sighted guide assistance to each participant during training sessions and for the Do the Grind Blind challenge on September 10th.

Wish us luck and stay tuned for an update on how we do in our next issue.

Interest Pieces

Thank You Youth Leadership Sponsors

A first-of-its-kind in BC, Blind Beginnings' Youth Leadership & Pre-employment Program prepares blind and partially sighted youth for their future transition to work and adult life. While the youth build employable and life skills, they also learn to see their true abilities and not be held back by limits set by others.

Blind Beginnings launched this program in 2010, and since then, it has provided over 60 youth 13-19 years with direct training and practical experience in leadership, team building, public speaking, communication, and career planning.

We are proud to acknowledge the organizations whose financial support is making this year's Youth Leadership & Pre-employment Program possible:

The Province of British Columbia

The Dave and Ann Trick Foundation

Hamber Foundation

Canadian Senior National Goalball Championships 2017

In the world of sports for the visually impaired, there are few original creations. Most sports, such as judo, swimming, cycling and many more, have been adapted from mainstream sports. But there is one major exception.

Goalball, a sport designed from the ground up to be played by athletes who are blind, is a 3-on-3 indoor sport played by six players wearing eyeshades or blacked out goggles so as to maintain as equal a playing field as possible. Players play using a ball weighing approximately 1.25 kg which contains bells used for locating and tracking. They throw the ball back and forth in order to score points by scoring into a net 9 metres in width at either end of the 18 metre court. However, it is far from simple. Different angled shots, bounce balls, curve and cut shots, and various rules combine to make this sport one that is truly unlike any other paralympic sport.

On the weekend of April 21st to 23rd, New Westminster hosted the 2017 Canadian Senior National Goalball Championships, which featured men's and women's teams from Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. As the host, British Columbia mustered two teams for both the men's and women's divisions and all four of these teams featured Blind Beginnings members.

Members of the Blind Beginnings Youth Leadership Program who were there included Amanda Pang, Keisha Anderson, Melody Shih, Jillian Sloan and Russel Leung. Program Graduates and Youth Mentors also attended: Ashlie Andrews, Brendan Gaulin, Clement Chou and John Tee, along with GTT leader Monty Lilburn and parent Franklin Leung as a coach.

The weekend had many hard battles for the veterans and new and fun experiences for the young rookies. In a post-tournament interview with Jillian Sloan, she said, "I was super nervous for my first game and tournament ever! But after going through the weekend I feel amazing and excited to get back to practice to make myself better."

When the dust settled in the women's division, the Ontario All Blacks would win their 10th straight national title. BC1 won silver and Nova-Q (consisting of players from both Nova Scotia and Quebec) won Bronze, while Alberta placed 4th and BC2 5th.

On the men's side, BC1 won its 5th national title in the last eight years and their first ever Gold on home court! Alberta got Silver and Nova Scotia got Bronze, while Ontario placed 4th, Quebec 5th and BC2 6th.

Women's MVP went to first-time recipient Emma Reinke from Ontario, while the men's MVP went to another first-time recipient Aron Ghebreyohannes of Alberta. Finally, this year's Spirit Award went to hometown boy Clement Chou representing BC1.

A big congratulations to all the athletes on their hard work and effort and to all the officials, volunteers and sponsors for a very successful event.

The 2017 BC Regional Braille Challenge

On February 24th, the 5th annual BC Regional Braille Challenge was held on the UBC Campus in Vancouver. The Braille Challenge is an academic contest for blind and visually impaired braille-using students between the ages of 6 and 18 across North America. Students are placed into categories according to their age. The categories from youngest to oldest are Apprentice, Freshman, Sophomore, Junior Varsity, and Varsity. Contestants are tested in five categories, including proofreading, charts and graphs, reading comprehension, braille speed and accuracy, and spelling, which takes the place of Speed and Accuracy for the Apprentice and Freshman groups. Those who place in the top ten of their category across North America have the chance to compete in the finals in Los Angeles, CA. The results of those who are heading to the finals was recently released, and we are proud to announce that Maggie Wehrle is the talented student who will be representing BC at the national level this year.

The Braille Challenge, just as its title implies, is a challenge, but it is also a lot of fun, and the Regional Braille Challenge is an awesome way to meet people and make friends. Thanks to Adam Wilton for his hard work in organizing the event, as well as to the many volunteer TSVI's, brailleists, and other professionals from within the vision community who did all the behind-the-scenes work to make this event possible. The 2017 BC Regional Braille Challenge was a big success!