



Limitless News

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Highlights

Blind Beginnings Fourth Annual Talent Show

Blind Beginnings is proud to announce that the 2016 talent show has been a successful fundraiser for the fourth year in a row. There were many different kinds of performances in the talent show including dancing, singing, playing instruments, a comedy act, and even a martial arts demonstration. At the talent show there were different booths set up around the room displaying different musical instruments, fifty-fifty draws and other prizes, a recording of the flash mob to watch, and a snack booth.

Another very interesting experience at the talent show was that Vocal Eye came and described

each performance as it was happening through a head set that visually impaired audience members could wear. This gave the visually impaired members the chance to enjoy the performances which enhances the experience.

This wonderful family event wouldn't have been possible if it wasn't for the youth of Blind Beginnings. All their hard work and dedication has paid off, from setting up and taking down equipment for each act, escorting performers on and off the stage, selling tickets and snacks, and doing all the behind the scenes tasks that made this event possible.

The talent show is a great environment for people of all ages to come and enjoy all the talent the Blind Beginnings youth has to offer. There are so many different and unique talents! Thank you to those who came out and supported Blind Beginnings at our fourth annual talent show.

Celebrating an Accessible Holiday Season 2016

Blind Beginnings had a great 2016, and we always look forward to capping off the year with a celebration of the holidays with our members! The festivities this year included a new take on an old classic: dining with a jolly old elf, and singing and feasting with friends.

The first outing of the season took place on December 11th, 2016 as Blind Beginnings youth and their families traveled to the famed Jericho Arts Centre in Vancouver to attend a production of Jacob Marley's a Christmas Carol. The play was an imaginative retelling of the traditional Christmas Carol story, but from the perspective of Jacob Marley, Ebenezer Scrooge's old business partner. The play was a production of the Obscura Theatre Company, written by Tom Mula, and directed by Guy Fauchon. The four-member theatre troupe put on an excellent show that featured skilled acting, and a fair bit of description in the script, allowing all of us with visual impairments to feel immersed in the scary world of Marley's afterlife. On top of the wonderful performance, this was no ordinary production, as the amazing team at VocalEye (<http://www.vocaley.ca>) were on hand to provide live theatre description for patrons who were blind or partially sighted. VocalEye is a non-profit that strives to make theatre and other arts and cultural events accessible to the blind and partially sighted community. Step Kirkland, founder of VocalEye, provided additional key information about the visuals on stage by way of headsets and a closed circuit broadcast, making for an even more vivid experience of this wonderful show. A huge thanks goes out to the Obscura Theatre Company, and VocalEye for helping Blind Beginnings make some wonderful holiday memories.

The following weekend was a busy one, and we were definitely feeling the holiday spirit. On the morning of December 17th, our Junior Explorer's club members got the opportunity to eat breakfast with Santa, and participate in some fun holiday activities. Our friends at our new Junior Explorer's club home in Surrey at the Bridgeview Hall Community Centre put on a wonderful Breakfast with Santa event, and we were there with jingle bells on. We chowed down on pancakes and sausages, and then the youth and families had the opportunity to take pictures with old Saint Nick himself. The event also included a craft table where kids got to make their own tree ornaments, and a games room that included throwing toy snowballs and fishing for candy prizes. What a great event it was, and a good way to start off our day, but it wasn't over yet!

Our next stop was in the afternoon for the Blind Beginning's annual Family and Friends Potluck Holiday Party. This party never fails to deliver, and this year's was no exception as there was plenty of food, friends, games and songs to go around. This year our party was at the Sapperton Hall in New Westminster, and we had a wonderful turn-out. There is always an abundance of food to be had, and this year there may have been more dessert than main courses, but we didn't hear too many complaints about that! In addition, we had some fun accessible games including a rope maze where kids followed a piece of yarn around the room,

disentangling it from the other pieces in order to find their prize at the end. The kids walked away with great wooden puzzles in the shape of animals. We also had a pass the parcel game, where former Blind Beginnings President and the leader of the all visually impaired choir, Marilyn Rushden, played the piano as the package was passed around the circle. When the music stopped, a layer of wrapping paper was removed, until one lucky winner went home with a container of chocolates. We topped off the party with some singing, as the amazing Tempos choir, many of whom are Blind Beginnings members, led us through some holiday classics. They even acquired a new little member from the crowd during the performance, and no doubt a star was born.

We had a great holiday, and we hope you did as well. If you would like to check out some pictures of our holiday events, feel free to drop by our Facebook page or our twitter account!

Youth Support Group

Youth who are blind or partially sighted between the ages of 14 and 19 were invited to participate in our new Seeing Things Differently Youth Support Group. These teens have a visual impairment, and that means that in many ways, their day to day experience differs from that of a sighted person. On top of the typical stresses of being a teenager, they have the added challenge of learning to do things differently in an often inaccessible world.

Likely, in their day to day life, they are not surrounded by other people with visual impairments, and as a result they are both an ambassador for blindness to the sighted world, and the only one doing things in a different way at school, at work, or in their family. By joining us for the Seeing Things Differently Youth Support Group they have the opportunity to connect with other youth with visual impairments and share concerns that are likely less common amongst their sighted friends in a safe and comfortable place.

The group began on Saturday January 14, 2017 and will run one Saturday a month until June. Meetings are hosted at the Blind Beginnings office in New Westminster – 227 6th St and the group is facilitated by Shawn Marsolais and Sean Heaslip.

Shawn Marsolais has a Masters in Vocational Rehabilitation Counselling, has 15 years experience working with children and youth who are blind or partially sighted and their families, and was born with a degenerative eye-condition.

Sean Heaslip was also born with a visual impairment, and is a Registered Clinical Counsellor, having completed his Master's in Counselling Psychology at UBC. Sean is currently working on his PhD in counselling Psychology at UBC.

It's too late to sign up now, but if you would be interested in a future group, please contact the office and add your name to the wait list.

Coming Up

Blind Beginnings Gala

Support us at our 7th Annual Gala on April 8!

It's 2017, and Blind Beginnings is excited to invite you to our 7th annual Gala Dinner &

Auction! Thanks to the generosity of our members and supporters, last year's Gala raised approximately \$35,000. We are hopeful that this year's event will be our most successful Gala yet!

As usual, you can look forward to a delicious buffet meal, a blindfold challenge, amazing auction items, live entertainment, dancing, and an opportunity to learn more about Blind Beginnings. We are also excited to announce that Arran Henn of 103.5 QMFM will be our MC again this year!

WHEN: Saturday, April 8, 2017

WHERE: Executive Plaza Hotel and Conference Centre | 405 North Road, Coquitlam

TIME: Doors open at 6:00pm | Dinner at 7:00pm

COST: \$80 – 11 years and older

\$900 - Tables of 12

\$40 - Children 10 and younger

To purchase tickets:

For payment by credit card, PayPal or cheque purchase on our website at <https://www.blindbeginnings.ca/donations/2017-gala-tickets/> OR call 604-434-7243 during office hours. Tickets purchased online or over the phone will be mailed to you.

Our office hours are Monday through Thursday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. If you would prefer to pay with cash or cheque, you can also come into the office to purchase your tickets.

The deadline to purchase tickets is March 30. Tickets will NOT be available at the door.

If you cannot attend the event but would like to support Blind Beginnings, you can:

- Sponsor a Blind Beginnings youth or family to attend the Gala
 - Donate an item for our live or silent auction
 - Make a donation by visiting <https://www.blindbeginnings.ca/donations/>
- Our goal is to raise funds to be able to provide Blind Beginnings programs to all BC families who are raising a child who is blind or partially sighted. Thank you for supporting us in our vision of a world where seeing things differently inspires limitless possibilities!

Youth Leadership Training Weekend

Plans are underway for our 7th annual Youth Leadership training weekend!

This exciting program is offered to blind or partially-sighted youth between the ages of 13 and 19 from across BC. The program is for youth to develop transferable employment skills including: public speaking, communication, mentoring, active listening and empathy, organization and time management, team building and leadership.

The Youth Leadership Network is a 3-day training workshop held in New Westminster. The training workshop will begin on Friday May 12 at 9:30 and will conclude on Sunday May 14 at 3:00 pm. Transportation will be arranged for participants who live outside of the lower mainland.

During the 3-day program, youth will participate in many exciting activities, some of which might

be new experiences. Participants will attend several workshops on relevant and interesting topics. They will stay in a hotel with a roommate and go to many different restaurants with the group as well. Youth will also enjoy meeting new people their age who are blind or partially sighted.

Once trained, Youth Leaders will be ready to volunteer in several capacities including:

- Mentoring younger children who are blind or parents new to raising a blind child
- Providing awareness presentations in their communities
- Assisting in the planning of fundraisers and special events

The objective of this program is to provide youth with transferable skills and volunteer experience that will assist them in their future employment pursuits. A secondary benefit is, through the mentor matching process, to provide younger children who are blind or partially sighted with opportunities to enhance self-esteem and set higher personal goals.

Stay tuned for more details on how to register coming soon.

Interest Pieces

Technology: The KNFB Reader

Being able to read printed text has been a challenge for people who are blind and visually impaired for a long time. There have been scanners, cameras, and various devices which all read text out loud by means of Optical Character Recognition (OCR). However, despite the myriad of solutions for reading text out loud that have been around for a long time, portable solutions on mobile phones have been around for only a few years. By far, one of the best solutions to emerge in recent times is the KNFB reader.

First making an exclusive appearance on the Nokia n86, this solution required a user to have that phone and a special attachment for the camera. But since September of 2014, the now modernized app is available on any android or IOS device for \$109.99. This app uses the built-in cameras of smart phones to recognize text on letters, restaurant menus, documents, books, and even digitally scanned image files. The "field of view report" button indicates what the camera is seeing and whether it is off center. Once positioned, the "take picture" button snaps a photo of the text then processes it to read aloud. Batch mode is available if multiple pages need to be scanned, and it is also possible to pull a file from your photo library, or documents from dropbox or similar file sharing services. When the image is processed, controls allow the user to read with built in text-to-speech, with controls to move by sentence, word, etc. Alternatively, one can simply read with the standard Voiceover controls. Text recognition results will vary depending on lighting, camera flash, and the format of the written page. However, even with these variables, the recognized characters are generally readable, and are sufficient to give a general idea of what is on the page. Scanned pages can also be saved as documents, sent by email or text, or copied to dropbox.

With a price so low, this portable solution is less than half the price of some of the well established assistive technology performing the same functions. It also doesn't hurt that sales are quite frequent on this product. With a scanning solution that you can carry around with you on your phone, this app is sure to be beneficial to those who need an option that is portable, fast and provides good results!

Sports

HELLO BLIND BEGINNINGS READERS!!! This spring, the Lower Mainland will be hosting two major Goalball tournaments!

Goalball is a Paralympic sport for blind and visually impaired athletes. It is played in a gymnasium on a volleyball sized court, 9m wide and 18m long, with a net at each end which is 9m wide and 5 feet high. Each team has a total of 6 players, 3 on the court and 3 on the bench. When on the court, all players are blindfolded to ensure equal play. The court is made up of zones via tape with string underneath to act as a tactile marker so the players can orientate themselves. Goalball is played with a rubber ball about the size of a basketball that has bells in it and no air. The goal is to roll or bounce the ball past the 3 opposing players into the net. In the men's game the ball can reach speeds in excess of 50km and the only way to stop the ball is to listen for the bells and dive and block it with one's body. There are two 12 minute periods and numerous other rules that make this game fast pace and exciting!

First, from March 3-5, the Vancouver goalball Club will be hosting its 2nd Annual International Grand Slam which will feature two teams representing British Columbia and the Vancouver Goalball Club. These teams will feature a few blind beginnings youth members including Clement Chou, Russel Leoung and John Tee to name a few. This year will also feature a women's division which may have more young BB members competing against teams from around the world, including the United States. The big prize of \$5000 is on the line and if you have not yet witnessed Goalball then you should check it out since everyone wants to win the big prize!

Secondly, from April 21-23, we will also be hosting the 2017 Canadian Senior National Goalball Championships. Once again, the home province of British Columbia will be well represented in both the men's and women's divisions, as well as featuring many young Blind Beginnings members and maybe even a special guest (wink wink J). However you will have to come out and watch to see who our special guest on the women's side might be! Come out and witness the best teams in the country go out and fight for the right to be crowned National Champions! The BC men look to reclaim Gold after back to back silver medal finishes and if they succeed it would be the first Gold since 2014 and the first Gold medal won on home court EVER!

Addresses and reminders will be sent out a few weeks before each event we hope you will be able to come out and support the home town teams!

Personal Story

About Myself: A presentation for the EDUC 281 "Family, School & Community" course

Written by Tomoyo Takaki

Capilano University

Early Childhood Care and Education Diploma Program

September 30th, 2016

Hi everyone! My name is Tomoyo Takaki. I grew up in Japan and came to Vancouver in March 2015. I'm going to talk about my childhood in the context of my family in this presentation.

My family consists of my parents, brother and grandma. At the point of raising me, my parents had two important policies. First, since I was born with visual impairment, they took me to various places and tried to let me experience many things with my brother as much as they could. They took us to beaches, fishing, mountains, amusement parks, shopping and small trips. Second, they treated me as if I were a non-disabled child; they let us do some house chores such as washing dishes and cooking, practice calligraphy and bike riding, and even help with their work in the rice fields.

I have a lot of great childhood memories with my family. One of them is helping to plant rice plants; this picture was taken during one of the planting seasons. My family has been farmers for generations, so we grow rice, barley, and soy beans every year. My parents or grandma brought my brother and I to the rice fields during the planting and harvest seasons to let us experience their work. At the time of the rice planting, the rice fields were filled with water, so we walked on muddy ground and put rice plants by hand at 15cm intervals. After this, we helped wash the trays for rice plants in the irrigation channel. Playing in the muddy fields was very exciting for small children, but at the same time, I felt proud that I could give a hand to my family.

When I look back to relationships with my family, I had the closest relationship with my mom because I spent much time with her. However, all of my family members are close to me. I always played with my brother, sometimes even quarreled, of course. Even though my father was quite busy with his work, he loved carpentry so we built a doghouse together on weekends. Moreover, although my mom-side grandma lived 5 minutes away from our house, I assume she is a family member too because she influenced me and my parents a lot. I am sure that if she didn't encourage my parents, they couldn't bring up me and my brother in the way they did.

I believe that parents' role is very significant for all children. However, I also consider that parents with children with disabilities are required more effort than other parents because children with disabilities are more likely to have less experiences. In my case, my family's role was giving me different kinds of experiences, creating my confidence, and letting me feel that I am a member of society.

Lastly, I'd like to share one episode which shows my parents' perception of children. When I was, maybe, 5 years old, I was climbing up a tree, and my neighbour said to my mom "Hey! You know what? Tomo is doing very dangerous thing!" Then my mom answered to her, "I know. And it's fine. If she falls down and feels pain, she would learn from it and stop or be more careful to do it." As you can see from this story, my parents have a strong image of a child and a policy to bring up children that children should learn from their own experience. It has helped me in many ways; I could gain a lot of experiences to encourage me to try new worlds, it helps me to have sense of wonder, and they let me do many chores so that I create self-confidence.

I believe that family plays a crucial role for child's life, and surely my family succeeded at it! I can't thank them enough for raising me in this way.



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