It Takes a Village

On April 13, 2008, Tyis Conner went into labor four and a half months into her first pregnancy. Her son, TyShawn Lewis came into the world weighing just one pound five ounces and measuring 12 inches long. “They told us babies born that small have little chance of surviving,” Tyis remembered. Miraculously TyShawn pulled through and defied all the odds. TyShawn remained in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) until the end of September that year. Tyis was right by his side the entire time while juggling two jobs and nursing school. TyShawn’s initial vision diagnosis was Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP), which caused the retina to detach rendering TyShawn legally blind.

In December 2008, he underwent three eye surgeries to remove his cataracts, performed by the highly trained and experienced ophthalmologist Dr. Sherwin Isenberg, who also serves on the Center’s Medical Advisory Board. The surgeries were successful, and today TyShawn’s low vision does not prohibit him from participating in the life of an active eight-year-old boy. He can maneuver around his environment without a cane and wears glasses to aid his vision. He is learning to read using a Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) and 22-point large-print.

The family found the Blind Children’s Center in 2011 after visiting several other schools recommended by the Early Intervention Regional Center. The welcoming staff and professional structure assured Tyis this was the right place for her son.

Continued inside

Sullivan Golf Classic Scores Bigger Than Ever

On May 15, stars from the entertainment and sports world took to the fairways and greens of the Riviera Country Club in Pacific Palisades to raise funds for the Blind Children’s Center at the annual Tom Sullivan Celebrity Golf Classic. This year marked the 25th installment of the Classic, an event spearheaded by the partnership of blind actor, writer and athlete Tom Sullivan and former L.A. Dodger and baseball great Steve Garvey. Net profits for the event were nearly a quarter of a million dollars—an event record!

Thanks to the generosity of title sponsor John Hancock Insurance, more than 120 golfers, including an array of athletes, entertainers, public officials, and media personalities joined forces to play 18 holes of charity golf. Notable celebrities included NFL stars Reggie Bush, Byron Chamberlain, and Zac Diles, NBA legend Norm Nixon, actor Ron Masak, and ABC sportscaster Rob Fukuzaki who all played on behalf of the children.

During the evening reception guests enjoyed a special presentation from our keynote speaker and celebrity emcee, Jim Nantz, of CBS Sports. The three-time Emmy award-winning and five-time National Sportscaster of the Year, graciously spoke on his experiences in the field and

Continued inside
This quote always had a special meaning to me as I have endeavored to follow the teachings of our modern-day management guru, Robert Greenleaf and his philosophy of Servant Leadership in my career. It has been my honor and privilege to serve the Blind Children’s Center for the past 33 years. During my tenure, I have witnessed the Center and its services grow leaps and bounds - from a small nursery school of 30 students to a private school serving more than 100 students and more than 500 family members each year. The education and family services program has grown to include full inclusion with sighted children in the program, an elementary component with kindergarten, first and second grades, common core curriculum, the coaching model, a social skills program, a publication program serving the visual impairment community in 75 countries, and our research program to name a few...

In addition, the Center added specialized services including Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, Occupational and Physical Therapists, Music Teachers, Parent Mentors and upgraded assistive technology to enhance our students’ learning opportunities. All of this contributing to the Center being recognized as a model program around the world.

I offer my deepest gratitude to all the people whose hard work made this possible. Thank you to our Board of Directors for your leadership, vision and commitment to our mission, our donors and friends for your generosity, caring and support, our staff for your love, dedication and tireless efforts, and most of all, the children and families we serve. For they truly demonstrate the courage, strength, and tenacity needed to succeed. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve. And by doing so, rejoice in our students’ accomplishments as they enter universities, work in The White House or blossom as autonomous individuals.

I am especially proud to have served as your Executive Director for the past five years. During this time, in addition to the program additions, we celebrated our 75-year anniversary, honoring our founders, the Delta Gammas, thanked and strengthened our relationship with our donors, and reorganized the Development Department to provide for the growing needs of our children and families. As a result, our fundraising revenues increased 98 percent over the last six years.

I leave the Center in good hands. Under the leadership of the management staff, the Center continues to Light the Way to a brighter future for our students and families. I thank you for allowing me to be a part of it.

Your humble servant,

Lena French

HONORARIUM

In recognition of Lena French’s 33 years of dedicated service to the Blind Children’s Center, we invite you to make an honorarium in her name. Please designate your gift on the enclosed gift envelope and your gift will be earmarked as an honorarium to the Center in Ms. French’s name. Thank you for your kind consideration!
In November 2012, Tyis took a step in a new direction accepting the position as BCC’s nurse. “In my professional life, I identify problems and try to solve them,” said Tyis. “I do believe my ability to stay organized and take care of people helped me in addressing my son’s medical needs.”

It was hard for both her and TyShawn for the first few months in her new position at BCC. Whenever he saw his mom at school, he wanted nothing but to be with her. “The teachers played an incredible role in helping me to let go and give TyShawn his independence. I learned to stop babying him and let him do as much as possible on his own,” she remembered.

“It does take a village to raise a child,” Tyis continued. Working as the Center’s nurse not only provided her with parenting tools and close relationships with the teachers, but it was also a way for her to give back to the school that helped her son during such a developmentally-important time of his life. “The resources I gained from the Center were invaluable,” she recalled with deep appreciation.

“The teachers at BCC pushed TyShawn to communicate his feelings through speech, and they succeeded.” Today TyShawn loves talking about his ideal car, a Ford Fusion, and of course Pokémon.

In September 2017, TyShawn will transition into 3rd grade at his local public school. Tyis is grateful for the support of the BCC staff that have prepared her for the process. After attending BCC for nearly five years, TyShawn has adopted a successful routine that works. “Our goal is to keep the momentum going he picked up at the Blind Children’s Center,” Tyis said, “and carry that with us into the future.”

His admiration for Tom Sullivan and the services provided by the Center.

Blind Children’s Center’s former Board President, Scott Schaldenbrand won the event’s prestigious Spirit of Light Award for his service to the organization over the years. The award was created in Steve Garvey’s honor to recognize one individual a year who exemplifies Steve’s dedication and service to the Center and the community.

If you are interested in attending next year’s Classic as a golfer or dinner guest contact Laurie Headley at 323.664.2153, ext. 2342, via email at laurie@blindchildrenscenter.org, or visit us online to learn more about the tournament at www.blindchildrenscenter.org/news-events/special-events-tom-sullivan EVENTS
UPCOMING EVENTS

Annual Meeting
Tuesday, October 3, 2017
Blind Children's Center

Blind Children's Center
Fall Golf Classic
Monday, November 13, 2017
San Gabriel Country Club

Light the Way to a Brighter Tomorrow...

This year marks the Blind Children's Center's 79th Anniversary. Since 1938 we have been providing children who are blind or severely visually impaired with the educational tools and practical skills to lead a successful life.

Join us as we build the foundation for another eight decades of private early education. We humbly ask you to consider including the Blind Children's Center in your estate plan so that these vital services can continue far into the future.

To include the Center in your estate plan, please use our legal name, “The Blind Childrens Center, Inc.” Fed ID# 95-1656369.

For more information, please contact Scott Kassel at 323.664.2153, ext. 2330, or via email at scott@blindchildrenscenter.org.

OUR MISSION:
To foster the development and education of children—birth through 2nd grade—who are visually impaired in an inclusive, family-focused setting.

www.blindchildrenscenter.org

CLASS OF 2017

July 13, 2017, was a bittersweet day as 11 of our students graduated from the Center, ready to move on with the next steps in their education. While we are always thrilled to see our children succeed and continue on to their local public schools, it is difficult to say goodbye to our students, many of whom have been with us since their earliest months.

We will miss all of you, but we know you are ready for the exciting road ahead! And remember, we are always here to offer support and continuing family services if you need it.

Until we meet again, all of the staff, board members and volunteers at the Blind Children’s Center wish the Class of 2017 the very best wherever your future takes you. Lots of love to you and your families!