From Our President
Gregory J. Grande

As I reflect on my two years as President of the Blind Children’s Center—including our accomplishments, challenges and changes—what impresses me more today than ever, is our stability. Through the generosity of a family of individual donors, foundations and community partners we have been able to withstand uncertain financial times, and emerge stronger than ever. For the second year in a row, we received the highest possible 4-Star rating from industry standard Charity Navigator. This past year we acquired new Common Core curriculum in math and language arts, so our students are able to keep pace with state and national educational trends, while developing our own Social Skills Program for children who are blind or visually impaired.

But there is another stability that is impossible to measure: the stability that the families of our students achieve. I have personally heard how difficult it can be for our parents to get the answers they so desperately seek. The Blind Children’s Center and its teachers, specialists, family workers, and parent mentors are here to provide those answers, offering stability to the families, and to the students themselves.

It has been my privilege to serve as President of the Blind Children’s Center for the past two years. I have the utmost confidence in my successor and good friend Danette Beck, and who better to take the reins than a member of Delta Gamma, the founding fraternity of the Blind Children’s Center? Great things are ahead for our children and their families thanks to all of you. Let’s build on our foundation of stability and success for another 78 years.

With gratitude,

Welcome Our New Board Member
Pilar C. Pettys

Born and raised in the Philippines, Pilar Pettys received her undergraduate degree in economics from De La Salle University in Manila before immigrating to the United States. She earned an M.B.A. from the Ohio State University, leading to a career in the banking and financial services industry. Pilar rose to the rank of Vice President, Relationship Manager in Wealth Management with Comerica Bank, before relocating to Los Angeles with her family in 2008.

Since then, Pilar has served as a Wealth Management Advisor for The Private Client Reserve of U.S. Bank, where she diligently helps clients work toward their financial goals. Pilar is an avid runner who enjoys outdoor activities with her husband and two boys, who are “the love of her life.”

First introduced to the Blind Children’s Center through her colleague Steve Sherline, Pilar attended last year’s Fall Classic and was so moved by BCC alumnus Carlos Martinez’s keynote speech that she immediately scheduled a tour of the Center. After visiting and learning more about the critical work we do, Pilar expressed interest in joining our Board of Directors. We are thrilled to welcome her to our team!

Pilar has an extensive background in charitable fundraising and event planning, and brings compassion and a wide network of relationships with her. A seasoned nonprofit Board Member, Pilar’s experience and commitment to the Center make her a wonderful addition to our esteemed Board of Directors.

With gratitude,
High Expectations

An old adage says that “time goes by faster as you get older.” While this may feel true to many of us, scientists and educators agree that the most critical developmental moments of a person’s life occur during the first three years. During those crucial 36 months, attachments to parents and caregivers are established, as well as the beginnings of language, mobility, self-help, and social skills.

After trying to conceive for ten years, imagine Adriana Flores and her husband Francisco Jacobo’s joy when they became pregnant with their first child. A normal pregnancy and delivery led to complications when their infant daughter Litzy was born with hydrocephalus, or an enlarged head, due to fluid in her brain. A shunt was inserted to reverse the condition but, as things seemed to be taking a turn for the better, doctors noticed Litzy’s eyes were twitching.

Difficult times followed. Litzy’s shunt became infected and she continued to cry more often than most infants. Initially slow to respond to visual and auditory prompts, doctors warned the family that Litzy might end up in a “vegetative state.” Adriana remembered those early months, “I felt so overwhelmed and alone,” she said. “It was just my husband and I facing this. We had no clue what to ask for or where to turn.”

Doctors believed Litzy was contending with a secondary condition and referred the family to their local Regional Center for services. Infant specialists noted increased visual impairments, and, in turn, referred the family to the Blind Children’s Center. Litzy and her family’s challenges had already been significant. Fortunately, she was still only six-months-old.

Litzy’s early start proved invaluable, as she immediately began receiving services through the Blind Children’s Center’s Infant Program. Adriana met with Parent Mentor Carlos Martinez, who had faced many of the same challenges a decade earlier when his own son, Carlos, Jr., attended the Center. As the father of a child with a disability and an expert in the field, Carlos brought compassion and much-needed information to the Jacobos. “I thought it was just my family,” Adriana remembered. “You become so locked into your world, but you realize when you come to the Center there are so many others in the same boat.”

By the time Litzy was a year old, specialists had determined her full diagnosis included coloboma (retinal holes), nystagmus (shaking eyes) and severe myopia (nearsightedness). But at the Blind Children’s Center these were medical descriptors, rather than limitations on her potential. “In Mexico, where my husband and I were born, children with disabilities are
often looked at with pity,” Adriana admitted. “But at the Blind Children’s Center, there were high expectations for Litzy. It changed my whole worldview.”

And something amazing happened with Litzy. Though it was difficult at the time, Litzy’s Infant Program teacher urged Adriana to leave the classroom so her daughter could learn to trust others. Litzy started walking at 14 months-old. Soon after, she was talking, engaging, and according to Adriana, “becoming herself.”

Litzy’s healthy growth has continued ever since. At three-years-old she began using a white cane to get around safely and working on early braille literacy skills. Litzy has developed into a strong reader, and, this year, she was one of 13 students to graduate from the Center, moving on to their local public schools in the fall.

“At the Blind Children’s Center, there were high expectations for Litzy. It changed my whole worldview.”

— Adriana Flores (mother)

“I realize now that I am someone who has overcome her fears and accepted the needs of her child,” Adriana said. “I am in a place of great gratitude to the Blind Children’s Center.” And as for Litzy? She said she is going to miss the Center—most notably recess and playing with her friends. But when asked if she is nervous about attending a new school, filled with students she’s never met before, she just shrugged. “A little but I’m still going to come and visit here sometimes. Besides,” she said, an assured smile flashing across her face, “I’m going to make new friends.” We all hold the same high expectations for Litzy and her entire family.
In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Harlyne Norris, one of Southern California’s most influential philanthropists and a longtime friend of the Blind Children’s Center. The mother of our very own Board Secretary Lisa Hansen, Norris was known far and wide for her passionate volunteerism and generosity. She was 83 years-old.

Raised in Santa Monica and educated at UCLA, Harlyne and her late husband Kenneth T. Norris, Jr. built upon the philanthropic tradition established by his parents, Kenneth, Sr. and Eileen. Their Kenneth T. & Eileen L. Norris Foundation has been one of Southern California’s most impactful charitable foundations since its inception more than 50 years ago, enabling the construction of the USC Kenneth T. Norris, Jr. Comprehensive Cancer Center & Hospital and the 450-seat Norris Theatre in Palos Verdes in addition to countless other projects.

But Harlyne Norris will best be remembered by her close friends and family for her compassion and intellect.

Light the Way for Future Generations

Since 1938 we have been providing children who are blind or visually impaired with the educational skills to lead a successful life. Help us build the strong foundation for another 78 years of private early education.

We humbly ask you to consider including the Center in your estate plan. Your gift will do more than you even thought possible to transform the lives of children who are visually impaired for generations to come.

For more information, please contact Kimberlee Jones at 323.664.2153, ext. 2304, or via email at Kimberlee@blindchildrenscenter.org.

To include the Center in your estate plan, please use our legal name, “The Blind Childrens Center, Inc.” Fed ID# 95-1656369
Fiscal year 2015/2016 proved to be another productive & prosperous year!

Best Practices
This year, in keeping with best practices the Center’s educational program was strengthened with:

1. Implemented Common Core standards enVisionMATH curriculum

2. Launched year one of a three year Social Skills Program

3. Upgraded assistive technology to enhance learning opportunities

Donor Support
- 59% Foundations
- 34% Individuals
- 5% Corporations
- 2% Civic Organizations

How It Helps
- 38% Educational Preschool & Afternoon Program
- 35% Kindergarten, 1st Grade & 2nd Grade
- 14% Family Services
- 10% Infant Services
- 2% Publications
- 1% Research

Research Project
“Characterization of Ocular Malformations in Infants with Possible Exposure to Zika Virus”
Awarded to R.V. Paul Chan, MD, FACS
University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Medicine

Events

100% of your donation goes directly to serving the children and families
Administration, Development, and Public Information costs are supported by the Investment Account. Audited Financial Statements are available on our website.

Volunteers provided leadership, time and support contributing tremendously to our success.
Our Year in Pictures
Our Donors

2015/2016 GIFTS OF DISTINCTION

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To learn more about how you can provide philanthropic support to the Center, please contact: Kimberlee Jones
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323.664.2153, ext. 2304
kimberlee@blindchildrenscenter.org

We also thank the numerous donors who gave up to $100 for the children this year.
Our Honorees
In acknowledgment of the extraordinary work accomplished at the Blind Children’s Center through the generosity of their time and talent, we are proud to present the 2016 honorees.

• Ambassadors of the Year
  Adriana Flores and Litzy Jacobo

• Champions of Light
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The Blind Children’s Center is a nonprofit Private School available to blind, partially sighted, and sighted children regardless of race, color, national or ethnic origin, sex, gender, religion or ability to pay. Founded in 1938 as a project of the Southern California Delta Gammas, the Center operates without state or federal assistance.

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