

BLIND CHILDREN'S CENTER

CELEBRATING 80 YEARS



ANNUAL REPORT 2018

4120 MARATHON STREET • LOS ANGELES, CA 90029-3584 • 323-664-2153 • www.blindchildrenscenter.org

LIGHTING THE WAY SINCE 1938



FROM OUR PRESIDENT DANETTE BECK

I cannot believe my term as Board President has come to a close. I posted on Facebook when I entered this role that I prayed for a level head, an open heart, and a grand vision as

I do my best to lead our board over the next two years. As I reflect, we have gone through enormous change as a board and as a school, and I am proud of our progress, and encouraged for our future.

Last year's watchword was Change, and this year, Unity is my guiding principle.

Our new CEO, Sarah Orth, has been with us for a year, and we could not be more thrilled to have her captaining our ship. Her vision, compassion, and thoughtful leadership continue to validate our selection. A new five-year strategic plan is being developed to help foster direction, unity and purpose for our volunteer board members. Their passion and dedication to the BCC is unflinching, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them, from the bottom of my heart, for all that they do.

We held our Inaugural Tables That Bloom Fundraiser on March 20th at the beautiful California Club, celebrating our successes while highlighting our integral partnership with the Delta Gamma Fraternity. On March 2nd, 2019, we will commemorate our 80th anniversary with a very special Tables That Bloom event at the same location. Stay tuned for more details about this not to miss event.

In 1960, John F. Kennedy famously remarked, "a rising tide lifts all boats." Those words are truer today than ever. Your support enables us to continue to provide our critical services for our students and their families. Let us build upon the legacy that so many people have helped build since 1938. I am full of gratitude as I turn the gavel over to my friend and colleague Jeff Leitzinger, whose vision will continue to light the way for those we serve.

Forever grateful,

BLIND CHILDREN'S CENTER

THEN: In 1938, UCLA's Head of Medicine Dr. Lillian Titcomb, and a team of committed Delta Gamma Alumnae volunteers from Southern California founded the Blind Children's Center out of a private residence. Referred to at the time as the Los Angeles Nursery for Visually Handicapped Children, the school was the first of four founded nationwide as part of the Delta Gamma Fraternity's "Service for Sight" initiative.

What began as a small nursery school grew rapidly through the years. A permanent facility was constructed in 1952 at our current location on Marathon Street, designed by legendary architect Paul R. Williams. In those days, the program was residential, with students staying at the facility both day and night, from Monday through Friday.

In 1966, our name officially changed to the Blind Children's Center to more accurately reflect our work. In line with best practices, our program evolved to become a non-residential day school, with students going home to their families each night. Perhaps our most significant change came 22 years later, when in 1988, we began our inclusion model, with sighted children integrated in each class to provide peer modeling opportunities and even greater access to academic and social growth.



THEN AND NOW



NOW: While much has changed during the past 80 years, our core philosophy remains the same: to empower our young students and their families with the skills to reach their highest potential.

Many of our early educational practices are still in existence. For example, we continue to teach braille to students whose visual impairment will require it later in life. But today, technology plays a critical



accessible, and

role. In addition to the traditional braille which remains a key tool, we are now fortunate to have computers and digital devices that make the acquisition of literacy skills that much more profound.

Rather than the hand held magnifiers of yesteryear, our current students with limited vision benefit from leading-edge VMDs (video magnification devices) which enable them to see close work on their desk and tilt the device's camera toward the front of the room to see the whiteboard and their teacher.

More than ever, we at the Blind Children's Center recognize that a diagnosis of blindness or multiple disability is not just a challenge for a young child; parents and caregivers, too, need skills and strategies to adapt. Through family support groups, medical support services and parent consultations, we are making sure that our families are equally prepared.



FROM OUR CEO SARAH E. ORTH, MPA



Since joining BCC last August, I have seen first-hand the impact of the Center's comprehensive, family-focused services; witnessed the expertise and compassion of our staff, and the dedication of our Board and the greater community; and I have been truly humbled by our 80-year history and reputation as a model program.

Much of 2018 was spent developing a strategic plan to guide us into the future. To deepen our understanding of the trends in our field, we reached out to other agencies serving visually impaired children and met with their leadership to learn about the challenges and opportunities they face.

Through our process we learned that there have been great strides worldwide in the prevention and treatment of visual impairments in children. However, the complexity of their needs has increased because the majority now have multiple disabilities that require more intensive therapies and intervention. This is putting significant financial strain on agencies working to impact these children and, in fact, has resulted in the closing or restructuring of numerous organizations. Recently, the lack of funding for education and services for disabled children has been at the forefront of discussions in the state legislature and among philanthropic leaders in Southern California.

Despite these challenges, donors like you have enabled the Blind Children's Center to remain steadfast in our commitment to improving the lives of children with visual impairments. Our forthcoming strategic plan will enable us to address the changing needs of our community, while developing a strong business plan that balances our resources with our expertise and our goal to prepare visually impaired children to navigate in a sighted world.

Thank you for your continued support of our efforts.

A handwritten signature of Sarah E. Orth.



YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER HEARD OF *THIS* “BARBIE” AND HER INCREDIBLE IMPACT ON DELTA GAMMA AND THE BLIND CHILDREN’S CENTER.



While Barbie Beckner was still a toddler, her mother Jeannie Blaine was already paving the way for the future of the Blind Children’s Center in Los Angeles. As one of the original founding members of the Center, Jeannie and her Delta Gamma sisters purchased the lot on Marathon Street and sought out visionary architect Paul R. Williams for the endeavor.

It’s no secret that Delta Gammas have played a pivotal role at the Center since its founding. In 1936, responding to the appeal of collegian Ruth Billow who had lost her sight in a childhood accident, the Delta Gamma Fraternity set Service for Sight as its national philanthropic mission.

This was the environment of service and compassion in which Jeannie raised young Barbie. Naturally, Barbie’s engagement with the Center began very early. In addition to attending meetings with the Center’s founder and original Executive Director Dr. Lilian Titcomb, Barbie made her first donation at the age of sixteen!

“My mother was always so proud of our spirit of service,” Barbie explained. “It fit such

a specific community and it allowed us to use all our resources to help the visually impaired community. I couldn’t help but be drawn into it, just like my mother had been.”



Barbie and Jack Beckner at BCC event, 1968

Barbie attended UCLA where she pledged Delta Gamma, determined to continue her own commitment of service to sight. Soon after graduating, she met men’s gymnastics prodigy Jack Beckner, a USC graduate who would go on to become her husband as well as a four-time Olympian and United States Olympic head coach. They had two sons, John and Michael, and a daughter, Maria, who also went on to become a Delta Gamma. Clearly Service for Sight runs in the family as Barbie also has three Delta Gamma granddaughters to add to the family legacy.



Former BCC Presidents Sue Shields (L) and Barbie Beckner at last year’s Tables That Bloom event.

Barbie’s support as a Delta Gamma with both the Fraternity and Center has continued and grown over the course of six amazing decades. She has served in an array of roles through the years: on the Center’s Board of Directors, as the Center’s Executive Director, and a classroom volunteer, from which she still holds cherished memories. “Our 1st grade students were learning to cut bananas for their fruit salad one day,” Barbie remembered. “When I returned the following week, the students asked the teacher if we were having more fruit salad. The correlation they made just from the sound of my voice was wonderful to witness.”



If you've never visited the Center, you might be surprised by the colorful paintings decorating the school's hallways. And for Barbie, that has always been one of her favorite parts about the historic building.

“I was always impressed with the way people were able to always physically leave their mark at the school and create a bright, encouraging environment for our students.”



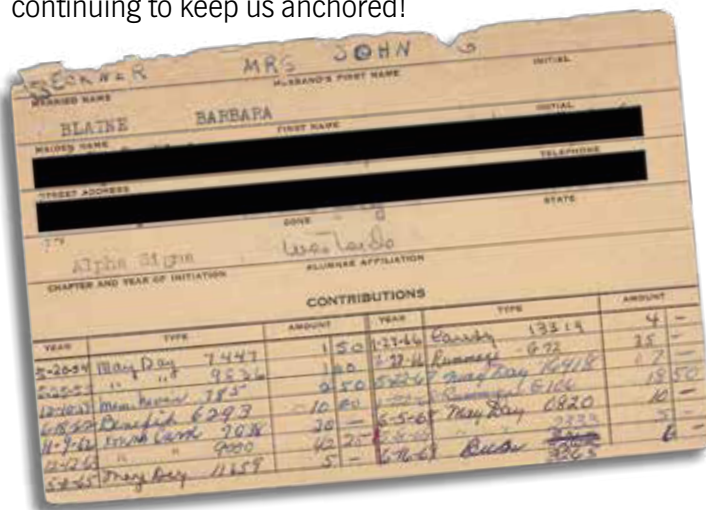
As the daughter of one of our founders and a Delta Gamma herself, the Center has always

been more than a school to Barbie. “The Blind Children’s Center is an oasis in the heart of one of our nation’s largest cities, where we can use our philanthropic mission to improve the lives of children and families who truly need it. We were incredibly fortunate to be able to visit the school as collegians because it instilled the value of service during a pivotal time in our lives.”

And what would Barbie tell a young Delta Gamma who has yet to visit the Center? A moment after flashing her

infectious smile, Barbie exclaimed, “It is a special experience. The Center has a homelike, family-focused atmosphere with a staff of loving and supportive people. The teachers, their assistants, family workers and even medical staff are all included in a wholistic approach. It’s so rewarding to watch these children and their families take wings and fly.”

We invite you to join us! This year marks 80 years of service thanks to the vision of our Delta Gamma founders, including Barbie Beckner’s own mother Jeannie Blaine. It’s incredibly inspiring that all these years later the Blind Children’s Center is stronger than ever thanks to our bond with the Delta Gamma Foundation. Thank you for continuing to keep us anchored!



Barbie's original donor card with first donation from 1954!



CIRCLE | LIGHT THE WAY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

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. Help us build the strong foundation for another 80 years of service in our community.

We humbly ask you to consider including the Blind Children’s 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 and their families for generations to come.

For more information, please contact Scott Kassel at **323.664.2152**, ext. **2330**, or via email at scott@blindchildrenscenter.org.

To include the Center in your estate plan use our legal name, The Blind Children’s Center, Inc. **Fed ID#: 95-1656369**



YOUR SUPPORT MAKES IT ALL POSSIBLE

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Completed construction on new Therapeutic Playground thanks to the generosity of the Moe-Life Foundation, Women Helping Youth, The Ahmanson Foundation, The Ray Charles Foundation, and numerous individual donors. Thank you!



• **ALL CLASSROOMS WERE INCLUSIVE**

53%

Visually Impaired/Blind

47%

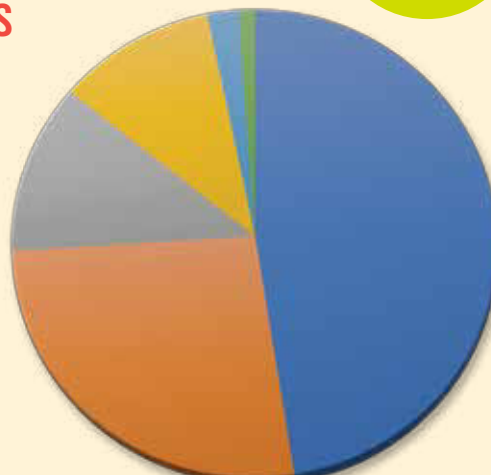
Typically developing

92

Children were served during the 2017/18 school year

42

BILINGUAL PARENT SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS



• **DONOR SUPPORT**

• **2017-2018 EXPENSES BREAKDOWN**

1. Foundations 47%

2. Events 27%

3. Bequests 12%

4. Individuals 11%

5. Corporation & Civic Groups 2%

6. Other 1%

• RESEARCH PROJECT

Brenda L. Bohnsack, M.D., Ph.D., \$25,000 | Kellogg Eye Center, University of Michigan, Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences Understanding the Molecular Basis of Congenital Eye Defects Associated with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

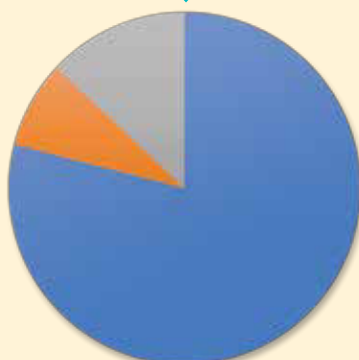
1. Program Services 79%

2. Administration 8%

3. Fundraising 13%

100% of your donation goes directly to serving the children and their families

Administration, Development & Public Information costs are supported by the Investment Account. Audited Financial Statements are available on our website.



OUR YEAR IN PICTURES



OUR DONORS

2017/2018 GIFTS OF DISTINCTION

It is our distinct pleasure to acknowledge the many individual donors and community partners who funded the Blind Childrens Center's vital work during the 2017/2018 fiscal year.

To learn more about how you can support the Center, please contact Scott Kassel, Director of Development & Communications at 323.664.2153 ext. 2330 or via email at scott@blindchildrenscenter.org

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OUR MISSION

Founded in 1938, the Blind Children's Center is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster the development and education of children—birth through 2nd grade—who are visually impaired in an inclusive, family-focused setting.

For the fourth year in a row, we have been awarded the highest possible 4-star rating from Charity Navigator. Only 14% of all U.S. Charities have been recognized as such for the past four years.



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