Dear Friends,

By the time you read this, I will have concluded my term as President of the Blind Childrens Center’s Board of Directors, and passed the torch along to my good friend Greg Grande. I have the utmost faith in Greg’s commitment, passion, and ability to lead the Center toward 80 years of services for children who are blind or visually impaired and their families.

I could fill this space with our accomplishments during the past year, both those of our dedicated staff and volunteers, as well as our incredible students, but they are outlined in other sections of the report. Instead, I would like to take a moment to reflect on what the past two years as the Center’s Board President have meant to me personally.

In my time as a professional, volunteer and Board member, I have never encountered an organization that felt as much like a family. The radiant energy inside the building and out on the playground, reflected in smiles between students and staff, feeds and sustains the executive arm of our organization.

I have continued to be moved, time and again, as I’ve witnessed my fellow Board members’ generosity and dedication to the Center’s mission. For these individuals, many of whom have become very good friends, their service is neither a hobby, nor an idle pastime. I have been privileged to work beside the most talented, compassionate group of people I have had the good fortune to meet, and I look forward to continuing to do so in whatever capacity the Board and the Center needs.

Before I sign off, I would like to extend my gratitude to my fellow Board members one more time for their support over the last two years. It has been an honor and pleasure to serve as your President. I would also like to take this opportunity to personally thank all of the donors and volunteers who continue to make the Center’s vital work possible. Never forget that you are the flame that lights the way for our children and their families.

With warmest regards,

Scott Schaldenbrand
President

**Coming soon**

Same great organization, exciting new look!

For 76 years now, the Blind Childrens Center has stood the test of time thanks to the generosity of dedicated supporters like you. We pride ourselves on our rich history, from our modest start in a private home with five students, to the growing organization we have become. Six years ago, we added Kindergarten through 2nd Grade classes to our existing services for infants and preschoolers, and we are making a greater impact than ever thanks to you!

This past year we served 104 children and 472 family members, an all-time high. As we continue to grow and evolve, our look will be changing, too. In the next few months be on the lookout as we unveil a new logo, updated website, and revamped promotional tools to spread the word far and wide about the important work we are doing at the Center!

Thank you for being an essential member of the Center’s extended family. We invite you to join our online community on Facebook and Twitter to stay up to date with our latest news and events!

**Welcome our new Board Member**

**STEPHEN SIMMONS** currently serves as the Features & Special Sections Editor for *The Beverly Hills Courier*. An alumnus of the University of LaVerne, where he later taught undergraduate journalism, Stephen is an award-winning writer and editor with more than 35 years of experience at Southern California publications including *Connections*, *The Corona-Norco Independent*, *The Press-Enterprise*, as well as *The Beverly Hills Courier*.

In addition to his journalistic expertise, Steve also brings considerable experience with the Los Angeles healthcare landscape. As Editor of *Connections*, a monthly publication of the Mental Health Association of Los Angeles County, Steve wrote and compiled stories relating to all aspects of the field, as well as covering and participating in conferences and meetings of mental health professionals, parents and clients.

We are thrilled that Steve is joining our Board of Directors, bringing his diverse experience, talents and passion for philanthropy to the Blind Childrens Center.
Healing the Whole Family
With support, education and persistence

Some might say the mission of the Blind Childrens Center is right in the name. But scratch a little deeper and you will find an organization that not only fosters the education of children who are visually impaired, but also meets the needs of their parents, siblings, and extended family.

“A diagnosis of blindness—or multiple disabilities which we are seeing more often—does not just fall on the child who has been diagnosed,” said Dr. Fernanda Armenta-Schmitt, Director of Education & Family Services at the Center. “All the members of the child’s family need to be equipped to prepare for the challenges they will face together. As a collaborative unit, they are that much stronger.”

Tatiana Aldave and husband Erick Hernandez of Canoga Park can attest to that truth. When their first son Chris was born, everything made sense and fell right in line with their expectations as parents. Twenty months later, Chris was joined in the world by his baby brother Bryant whose early days were far less certain. Unlike Chris, who was born with perfect vision, Bryant was born with microthalmia, a rare condition that left him completely blind in his right eye.

“We had no family history of visual impairment,” Tatiana remembered. “It was terrifying.” She and Erick searched around, reeling, trying to find the right services for Bryant. They found help through the state at their local Regional Center, but as Bryant passed his first birthday, they felt he needed more specialized care. Thanks to a timely referral, Tatiana and Erick brought Bryant to the Blind Childrens Center just after he turned 18 months old, the first of many turning points to come.

“I was blown away when we arrived,” Tatiana said. “Seeing the services for the first time was incredible, and watching the sighted children and the visually impaired children learning and playing together gave me so much hope for Bryant and our whole family.”

With Bryant attending the Infant Program, Tatiana and Erick enrolled Chris in the preschool as a typically developing child in the Center’s full inclusion program. The inclusion model offers unique peer interactions for children with visual impairments like Bryant, and equally unique experiences for children like Chris.

“Getting involved with other kids with special needs has definitely helped Chris understand his brother better,” Tatiana said. “He has become more sensitive all around. I notice now he doesn’t differentiate between the students anymore according to who can see and who can’t. ‘They’re all my friends,’ Chris tells me.”

That said, the road hasn’t always been easy for Bryant, who has already endured two surgeries during his young life, one on his eye and another to aid mobility in his thumb. “Through it all, the staff at the Center stood by us,” Tatiana said. “The team helped us make a plan before going to the doctor and supported us at the hospital. They showed us how important it is to speak up if we feel like something is wrong with our child or he needs extra attention. If we don’t speak up, our child may not get what he needs, so we have to be persistent.”

Continues on page 5.
Your support

528 Volunteers
8,000 Volunteer Hours

5 Fund Raising Events
- First Annual Fall Golf Classic
- Mawardi Golf Challenge
- Les Marraines
- Team Blind Children LA Marathon
- The Tom Sullivan Celebrity Golf Classic
Sponsored by John Hancock Insurance

TOTAL RAISED $329,343

Foundations 51%
Civic Org 4%
Corporations 13%
Individuals 32%
Research 1%
Publications 2%
Infant Services 9%

104 Children
- 68% Visually impaired/blind
- 32% Typically developing

472 Family members

Educational Preschool & Afternoon Program 43%
Family Services 13%
Kindergarten 1st Grade 32%
2nd Grade

...makes all this happen.
It was that persistence from Tatiana and Erick, specialists at the Center and doctors that eventually led to Bryant’s autism diagnosis, in addition to his visual impairment. But Tatiana and Erick felt more prepared this time, and through everything they have learned, they were able to adapt more easily to his second diagnosis.

“The experience has brought our family closer together,” Tatiana said. “It hasn’t been easy. I had to stop attending college for two years to focus on Bryant’s needs. But he has made so much progress where now I feel comfortable moving ahead with my own education and taking the steps I need for myself and my family.”

And Tatiana speaks of a new family she has found at the Center—the other parents who are going through similar situations and the parent mentors, themselves parents of visually impaired children, who coach them. “We were so focused on Bryant, I think we forgot that Chris needed a lot of attention, too. We weren’t worried about him as much because he was a typical child,” she said. “It was hard to admit at first, but the parent mentors at the Center really helped a lot, and made us realize that Chris had his own specific needs.”

After three years as students, the Hernandez brothers recently moved on as graduates of the Blind Childrens Center. On a sunny day this July, both boys donned cap and gown, as they received their certificates and marched toward success. Both boys are starting public school this fall, and Tatiana and Erick are more confident than ever that they are ready to excel.

“The Blind Childrens Center has helped us in so many ways. The specialists were there for us at the hospital during Bryant’s surgeries, through his autism diagnosis, and whenever we needed advice on educating and raising our children,” Tatiana said. “We know the future is bright for these boys. We are so thankful to the Blind Childrens Center for lighting the way.”

Service, dedication and generosity
A Legacy of Kindness

How do you want to be remembered? That’s a question Robert Moore asked himself after the love of his life Helen passed away. Robert was in his mid-80s at the time, with a lifetime of accomplishments, from serving his country in World War II to playing running back for the Pittsburgh Steelers, to a successful career years later as a structural engineer in California. First introduced to the Blind Childrens Center by his good friend, Board Member Ina Zec, Robert was immediately drawn to organization’s mission and rich history.

“Robert was one of the nicest people I’ve ever met,” said his financial planner Chris Rossberg of Raymond James & Associates in Los Angeles. “He and I had a long discussion after Helen passed away, and Robert made the decision that he wanted his legacy of kindness to benefit young children in need.” After learning about the Blind Childrens Center, its mission and services, Robert decided he wanted to leave a substantial sum to guarantee future generations of children who are visually impaired will have access to the very best services available.

We cannot thank him enough for his kindness. Robert Moore is a true American hero to whom we are ever indebted. We salute his brave service to our nation during its greatest conflict, his dedication to his beloved wife Helen, and his generosity to the children and families of the Blind Childrens Center.

There are many ways to give to the Blind Childrens Center, and a planned gift, such as Robert Moore’s bequest is just one option. If you would like to find out more about including the Center in your estate plan, please contact:

Kimberlee Jones, Director of Development
(323) 664-2153 ext. 304
kimberlee@blindchildrenscenter.org
Our year in pictures

- **First Day of School**
  - Wed, Sep 4

- **Annual Meeting**
  - Mon, Sep 23

- **Children’s Halloween Party**
  - Thu, Oct 31

- **Les Marraines Halloween**
  - Thu, Oct 31

- **ASICS LA Marathon**
  - Mar 8

- **Mawardi Golf Challenge**
  - Thu, Jan 30
2013/2014 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 2013/2014 fiscal year.

To learn more about how you can provide philanthropic support to the Center, please contact Kimberlee Jones, Director of Development at (323) 664-2153, ext. 304, or kimberlee@blindchildrencenter.org.
Continues on next page.
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Eye-Das
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Festival of the Arts
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Ms. Helen Schmitt

Aiden B. Ayvaz
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Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Horton
Ms. Helen Schmitt

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BLIND CHILDREN’S CENTER STAFF
Dr. Paul Lee
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In acknowledgment of the extraordinary work accomplished at the Blind Childrens Center through the generosity of their time and talent, we are proud to honor…

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