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.

Around the time TyShawn turned three, his medical conditions began to stabilize, and Tyis sought to integrate a more structured educational routine. The local Regional Center advised Tyis to initiate the process of transitioning 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 his admiration for Tom Sullivan and the services provided by the Center. Continued inside
“Good leaders must first become good servants.”
- Robert Greenleaf

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 and 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, elementary component with kindergarten, first and second grades, common core curriculum, coaching model, social skills program, publication program, serving the visual impairment community in 75 countries, and 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, our staff for your love, dedication and tireless efforts, and most of all, the children and families we serve. I thank you for allowing me to be a part of it.

Lena French

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 grow leaps and bounds - from a small nursery school of 30 students and a private school serving more than 100 students and more than 500 family members each year.

Your humble servant.

Lena French

At bottom of 2nd page in right column, let’s add this blurb for an honorarium for Lena

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.

“It was the Tom Sullivan Celebrity Golf Classic that first brought the Blind Children’s Center to my attention,” Schaldenbrand said. “As a life-long golfer, playing at the Riviera was once in a lifetime opportunity that piqued my interest. It’s a team effort. We bring hope to children and their families who need it the most, that’s why we’re here.”

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
UPCOMING EVENTS

Annual Meeting
TBA
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. 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 323.664.2153, ext. 2330, or via email at scott@blindchildrenscenter.org.

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

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 12 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! ☀️