Layla was born on Christmas Day, five years ago. Despite the joyous occasion, her parents, Salvador and Roxana, were faced with uncertainty when they learned their daughter was severely visually impaired due to glaucoma and aniridia. Layla endured multiple surgeries to relieve pressure in her eyes that first year, and more recently, a corneal transplant; yet her vision is still extremely limited. The family faced a difficult journey, but they were determined to build the very best future for their daughter. As they searched for support, Layla’s parents kept hearing about the Blind Children’s Center. They visited and immediately felt at home. Since Roxana is a working mother, the family first benefited when Layla’s grandmother attended the Infant Program with Layla. This is the essence of the Center’s family focused approach: Grandma then transferred what she learned to Roxana and Salvador at home. Roxana, who has been in special education health care for years, was inspired to begin working with visually impaired children to better understand her own daughter, and has now made that her career path. “I knew certain things from my work,” she said. “But being a parent is a totally different ballgame. There’s the emotional part. The teachers and specialists have been really supportive and open in answering any questions we have.” As an only child in her home (she has an older adult sister), Layla has become very imaginative and creative and she brings that spark to school (see pg. 2). She loves art, painting especially, and can occupy herself for hours. Layla is already working on her braille skills since her vision may deteriorate over time. She has also become quite resourceful using technology to help her and is learning to advocate for herself and ask for the things she needs.

Ollie Cantos - From BCC to the White House and back to California!
We would like to extend heartfelt congratulations to one of our most accomplished alumni, Ollie Cantos, who was recently elected Councilman from West Covina. A graduate of Loyola Marymount University Law School, Ollie has been a leader in disability and civil rights activism since 1990, having worked in the White House for multiple US Presidents. After decades in Washington, DC, Ollie has returned to his home state and is inspired to make a difference in his community, as a politician and role model. We are incredibly proud of your accomplishments, Ollie, and grateful for your support of our mission!
Dedicated volunteer supporter Dylan Cannon first made an impact at the Blind Children’s Center in 2009 when he and a friend bicycled from Los Angeles to San Diego raising $7,500 to benefit the Blind Children’s Center. Last month, Dylan completed the 2023 Carlsbad Marathon, raising more than $5,000 for the Center. “Sight is a gift and I am grateful to be able to help,” Dylan said. We are incredibly grateful to Dylan for his support! If you would like to organize your own fundraiser to benefit our students and their families, please email info@blindchildrenscenter.org.

On Thursday, December 15, 2022, the Blind Children’s Center hosted its annual Holiday Party as an after hours event in partnership with the Los Angeles Police Department’s Rampart and R&I (Records and Identification) Divisions. BCC’s entire student body lined the school’s entrance, eagerly counting down in unison awaiting Santa’s arrival. Bringing the holiday spirit like never before, sirens filled the neighborhood as Santa and his sleigh made their way to BCC accompanied by dozens of LAPD officers bringing an abundance of beautifully wrapped gifts handpicked for every child. The Center’s students cheered as they took Santa’s hands and escorted him to a reserved front row seat with a perfect view of the show. Every class sang their hearts out and danced up a storm as LAPD officers, Delta Gamma alumnae, and BCC staff cheered them on—the biggest crowd in the event’s history! When the show closed, students and their families each got a personalized photo with Santa!

For more than 30 years, BCC’s heroes from the LAPD have provided an unforgettable annual tradition of generosity and kindness. We are so grateful for their continued partnership and their commitment to making sure our students and families feel the love and joy of the holiday season!