Blind Children's Center
Lighting the way since 1938

Light the Way

Summer 2026 Newsletter

Year End Celebration

On June 25, BCC families, students, and staff came together to celebrate a wonderful year of learning, friendship, and growth. This year was especially meaningful as our first full school year in our renovated and expanded facility, where children explored, connected, and continued building the skills they need to thrive. The celebration included ice cream, face painting, temporary tatoos, sensory games, sticker stations, and more fun activities for our students and families to enjoy. We are so proud of all our children accomplished this year and grateful to our dedicated teachers, staff, and families for making it such a successful and joyful school year. Our students will be back in the middle of August after a short summer break. We can't wait for another amazing year!

Celebrating Fathers and Family Engagement at BCC

Blind Children's Center values family participation in each child's growth and development. BCC is proud to celebrate the wonderful fathers and father figures who stay involved well beyond school drop-off and pick-up.

Research continues to highlight the need for familial engagement in early childhood education. According to a Southwest Educational Development Laboratory study, "programs and interventions that engage families in supporting their children's learning at home are linked to higher student achievement." Similarly, researchers at the National Center for Education Statistics found that children are more likely to succeed in school when their fathers are actively involved in their education. These findings reinforce the meaningful impact that a father's involvement can have on a child's growth and development.

"Families benefit when dads are engaged in their children's learning and development."

BCC intentionally creates opportunities for fathers and father figures to engage in their children's education, build parent-teacher relationships and connect with other families. Through programs such as Coffee Club, Baby and Me, Early Head Start and Raising Dads, BCC encourages fathers to be active participants in their children's development both in and out of the classroom. For preschool teacher Saul Valdivia, that commitment to inclusivity was evident from the moment he joined the team three years ago. With more than a decade of teaching experience and firsthand experience navigating a disability, Valdivia believes BCC stands out for its intentional approach to creating a welcoming environment for everyone.

"BCC works to remove the stigma that fathers don't need to be included in the classroom," said Valdivia. "Families benefit when dads are engaged in their children's learning and development."

As the only male early childhood educator at BCC, Valdivia appreciates the role he plays both in the classroom and as an example for the fathers who participate in BCC's programs. "I am grateful that BCC has given me the opportunity to be a positive male figure in my students' lives," he said.

That welcoming environment is something Daniel Iniguez experienced firsthand after enrolling his son at BCC. He recalls it as a "blessing" to find a program that welcomed his family and offered resources that would help his son grow and thrive, keep him informed about his son's progress and impart strategies he can use at home. Iniguez participates in BCC's monthly fathers' meetings, which he describes as "life changing."

"The meetings allow me to discuss the challenges I face, while also listening to others share their experiences," said Iniguez. "Beyond the meetings,

BCC provides informational pamphlets, and each staff member is always willing to answer any question I might have."

The relationships formed through these programs extend beyond the classroom. Daniel values the chance

to connect with other fathers through BCC activities and events. He recently attended BCC's spring celebration, where he enjoyed the afternoon outside with his children and other families. For him, staying involved is about making the most of every opportunity to support his son.

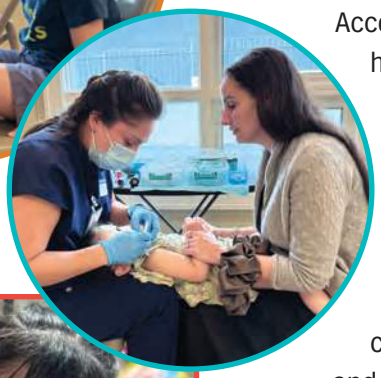
"Time goes by so fast, and in the blink of an eye, they will be older and doing their own things," he said. "That's why I do everything I can to spend quality time with my son, stay involved at school, maintain communication with his teachers and find ways to improve his school experience."

By creating welcoming spaces and supporting families every step of the way, BCC continues to show that fathers are not just welcome in early childhood education—they are an important part of it.

Welcome New Board Member

Blind Children's Center is pleased to welcome Tejal "TJ" Patel to our Board of Directors. TJ brings deep experience in healthcare risk management, governance, insurance strategy, compliance, and operational leadership throu gh her work with complex health systems, including Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. Her expertise in enterprise risk, patient safety, strategic planning, and fiduciary oversight will be a meaningful asset as BCC continues to grow and strengthen its programs for children who are blind or visually impaired and their families.

TJ's connection to our mission is also deeply personal. Her late father was actively involved in vision-related philanthropy through Lions Clubs International, and her family has continued that legacy through support of the Sankara Eye Foundation. We are grateful for TJ's commitment to service, her thoughtful leadership, and her desire to help advance BCC's mission of preparing children of all abilities to thrive.



Dental Clinic Brings Smiles to BCC

Healthy smiles start early, and dental health is an important part of every child's overall well-being. On June 4, BCC welcomed Yanira Casasola, BSDH, RDHAP, who provided dental screenings for our students and shared helpful guidance with families on building strong oral hygiene habits at home.

According to the CDC, by age 8, more than half of children — 52% — have had a cavity in their baby teeth, underscoring the importance of early dental health education and preventive care. Early dental care helps support children's comfort, confidence, nutrition, and readiness to learn.

We are grateful to Yanira for helping our families prioritize healthy smiles from the very beginning.

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2026 Research Grant Awarded

For more than 30 years, Blind Children's Center has supported promising medical research focused on preventing and treating vision loss in children. The Lisa D. Hansen Medical Research Grant provides seed funding to scientists whose work may lead to better diagnosis, treatment and understanding of childhood visual impairment.

The award honors longtime Board Member, donor and friend Lisa D. Hansen, who strongly championed the Center's research program.

This year, Blind Children's Center awarded a $25,000 grant to a research team at the University of Iowa. The team will use artificial intelligence to study nystagmus, a condition that causes involuntary eye movements and affects approximately one in 400 children.

Researchers will analyze detailed eye-movement recordings from 100 children to determine whether AI can help identify the cause of nystagmus and predict future visual outcomes. Their goal is to make diagnosis earlier, more accurate and more accessible, while reducing the need for costly specialized testing.

The Center's grant is intended to help launch innovative studies that can attract additional funding and ultimately improve care for children with visual impairments.