



July 2011
Vol. 35, Issue 5

Our Mission...

Visually Impaired Persons of Southwest Florida is a non-profit rehabilitation center committed to ensuring blind and visually impaired persons have the tools, support and opportunities necessary to successfully achieve their desired level of independence.

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From the Executive Director's Desk

Great things are happening at Visually Impaired Persons of Southwest Florida! Our newsletter is full of 'the good stuff' that drives everyone who is a part of this agency.

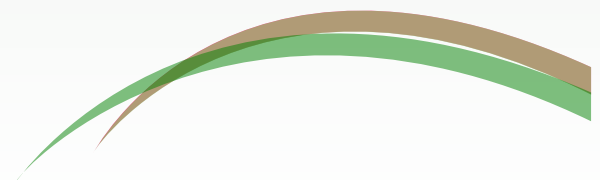
Just to give you an example, in the same week, we received a significant achievement for our accreditation and added a brand new program.

First, we received the maximum accreditation allotted from The National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving People with Blindness or Visual Impairment. The Visually Impaired Persons of Southwest Florida received a five year accreditation! We are so proud of this great achievement!

Also, we expanded our service area and are now serving all of Lee, Hendry and Glades Counties!

Last but not least- starting July 1st Visually Impaired Persons of Southwest Florida is expanding its programs and services by adding a Blind Babies program. This program will serve blind babies and their families in Lee, Hendry and Glades!

Douglas Fowler, LMHC
Executive Director



Exciting News! Blind Babies Program is here!

As of July 1, 2011 Visually Impaired Persons of Southwest Florida is proud to announce their expanded services program called Blind Babies.

This new program will service blind and visually impaired babies from the ages of birth to 5 years of age. The program will serve all of Lee, Collier, Hendry and Glades Counties.

This expansion has been in the



works for some time and because of all the hard work and dedication by all the staff members it is now set to begin in just a few short weeks!

Congratulations VIP Center for all the hard work and dedication to serving the blind and visually impaired!

For more information regarding the new Blind Babies program please contact: Margaret Ruhé Lincoln, Director of Operations at 239-997-7797.

2011 United Way Site Visit A Success!

This year's United Way Site Allocations Team visit was May 18th and we decided to do things a little differently. Instead of providing a typical presentation about our services and programs we wanted the allocations team to live a few moments in the life of a few of our clients.

When the allocation team members entered the center we handed them an index card and a blindfold. The index card let them know a brief history of the client they were going to portray for the next 20 minutes and the blindfolds helped give them a real life demonstration of what it would be like to lose your vision.

Over the next 20 minutes team members were taken into one of four classes where they became one of our students. During this



process some team members peeled potatoes and poured water completely blind, while others learned how to use their computers with no sight.

Finally at the end of their demonstration the team members were given the opportunity to meet the actual client they portrayed during the site visit.

The overall experience was a complete success with positive comments and feedback from the entire team. Living in the shoes of someone with vision loss, even if it was only for 20 minutes, was one of the best ways to "show" United Way the services and skills we provide to our clients everyday!

Board of Directors

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The Third Annual VIP Boat Ride and Picnic with the Rotary Club of Cape Coral

On May 7th, 2011, the Cape Coral Rotary Club sponsored the third annual boat ride for the Visually Impaired Persons of SWFL (VIP Center), several clients, staff of the VIP, and fellow Rotarians. We enjoyed the beautiful day which was filled with excitement and anticipation.

The thrill of cruising on the Gulf of Mexico to the Sanibel Lighthouse was a experience for all to remember. It was the third year for the boat ride specifically put on for the VIP Center. Each year it gets better and wetter! Over seventy (70) people attended the fun filled event! Afterwards, appetites were satisfied with a delicious lunch and refreshments!

It was such a delightful day, many comments were made and a great time was had by all. It was also a learning experience for the general public as some watched with keen interest.

Judy Sunday (VIP client) along with her husband Art Sunday said "It was such a great opportunity to get out and enjoy ourselves doing something we normally would not do."

Crystal Barrs, a visually impaired staff member remarked "What a great stress release, having this feeling of such freedom." Crystle herself was given a chance to drive the boat with the experienced boat Captain by her side. Even Swifty (her golden retriever service dog) sniffed the sea air as they flew by the coastline.

David Scott, past president of the Cape Coral Rotary said "We get just as much out of this day as your visually impaired and blind clients; this is the event we all look forward to doing every year." Scott also added, "You guys help put my life into perspective and for that I am grateful."

Susan Hoffman, a VIP staff member and a first time rider said "It was wonderful and I was so impressed on how warm hearted and informative the Rotarians were. They were great at describing what the boats, and scenery looked like, and the directions we were headed."

As you can see, this was an awesome opportunity for both the sighted and visually impaired to share an experience that will be treasured forever.

Sea you next year!





Did you know? Guess who's new!

On April 11, 2011, Judy Bezdek, a dedicated volunteer was offered a position at the Visually Impaired Persons of Southwest Florida (VIP Center) as a receptionist at the front desk. Her hard work and determination has made her a great asset to the VIP Center.

Judy has been a long time resident of Cape Coral since 1966. Her visual impairment has not stopped her from living with independence in her own home since losing her vision six years ago. She is a proud mother her son Tony, who resides in Arcadia with his lovely wife.

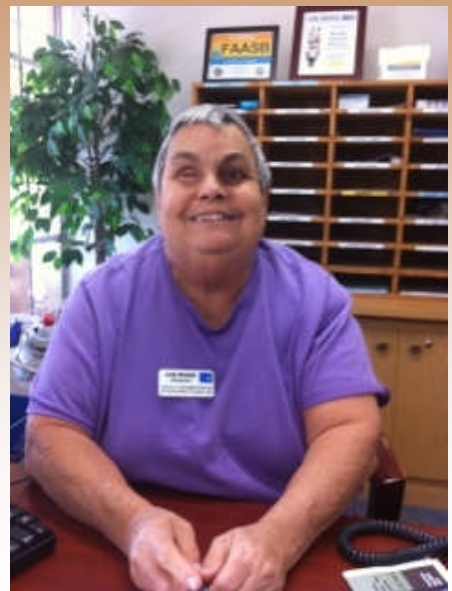
Judy started her journey with the VIP in 2008 as a client and quickly started volunteering in the card room, separating, organizing and decorating the cards that are donated to the center. Soon she was answering phones and conversing with clients and staff to brighten their day in many different ways, while at the same time she is staying on top of everything in the front office. It is noted that when you walk into the front door at the center Judy is always there with a bright smile and a friendly hello!

Judy's goal was always to achieve employment with a reputable company that would allow her to use the skills she learned while taking classes at the center. She has volunteered at the DBS and Goodwill stores also as part of her rehabilitation from vision loss and as part of her training to find employment. As Judy continued her search for a job, the VIP Center grew to become more and more dependent on Judy's time spent at the front desk. After some discussion it was unanimously decided that Judy would be hired on as an official receptionist at the VIP Center.

Judy is proud to be part of the VIP staff and wants all to know that it is because of the dedication of the instructors and staff of the VIP, she has the professional training that she needs to do her job with expertise. Judy also stated "I am so honored that the staff has confidence in me to do the best job I can".

Judy is fondly nicknamed the "General" and smiles broadly when she hears it.

Welcome to the VIP staff "General Judy"!



*As selfishness and complaint
pervert the mind, so love with its joy clears
and sharpens the vision.*

~Helen Keller~

Thank you to our affiliates!

