



INSIGHTS

SUMMER ISSUE - 2013

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2013/2014

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BOARD MEMBERS:

The Delta Gamma Center welcomes Markus Cicka, Jenna Lolli and Jennelle Vickers to the 2013-2014 Board of Directors.

We thank Melissa Brueggeman, Brent Jackson, Ed Maglasang and Charlie Walch for their years of dedicated service in the areas of finance and resource & development.

MISSION: *The mission of the Delta Gamma Center for Children with Visual Impairments is to help children who are blind or visually impaired reach their full potential through family-centered and specialized services and support.*

From the Desk of Debbie Naucke

Executive Director

Dear Friends -

In spite of the St Louis humidity, spring and summer are my favorite seasons. As a child, summer always held the magic of long days outdoors. While times have changed, the articles contributed by our staff in this newsletter serve as a reminder of why summer holds such a special place in my heart. Summer opportunities abound for families! I hope everyone partakes in some of the activities that summer has to offer, such as visiting playgrounds, going on a picnic, and more. This newsletter includes ideas on how to make these activities meaningful, but most importantly, HAVE FUN! Cherish these days and make memories for your entire family.

As we end our 2012/13 fiscal year, I find myself reflecting frequently on the activities of the Missouri state legislature in an attempt to balance the state budget and fund important services. Many of our readers received emails requesting your support for the First Steps Program. Thankfully, after a concerted effort and public outcry, in the final hours of legislative session the First Steps Program was funded for the next year. I share my deepest gratitude to everyone who answered the call, and I urge individuals to thank their legislators as well. We have more work ahead of us, so it is important to keep awareness high.

Given this uncertainty, it is commendable that our Board of Directors has committed to some exciting new projects in the next year, so stay tuned! Summer brings a change in our board of directors (see listing on the left) as we start a new fiscal year July 1st. It is also a time to say goodbye and thanks to our retiring board members whose amazing leadership for the Center (and much guidance to me) will forge our future. They are the champions among our many community supporters whose attitudes and support together are priceless in helping to shape the real possibilities of the children served by the Center.

Also, among our champions are the family fundraising teams for the 2013 Run for Sight. While the Run for Sight might seem like a distant memory, the family teams worked hard for months, and their fundraising will support thousands of hours of services for many months to come. All of their stories are a testament to the power of the human spirit, and "Joshua's journey" article is a must read for the eloquence in which Joshua's dad shares his story.

I wish I could single out each and every individual who has contributed to our success because it is truly a collective effort. You are many, so I cannot, but I hope that each and every person knows that I think of them with the deepest of gratitude. And of equal importance, there is still much to be accomplished together.

Have a wonderful summer!

Volunteers Wanted!

The Delta Gamma Center is looking for a few great volunteers for two of our programs.

Buddy Builders, a parent-child class, meets the first and second Wednesday of the month from 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

and Group Recreation and Developmental Support (GRADS) activities, which meets the first Saturday of the month from 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM.

If you are interested in volunteering for either of these programs, please go to www.dgckids.org and fill out the volunteer form or email info@dgckids.org for more information.

*"Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much"*
- Helen Keller

United Way Helps

The Delta Gamma Center has been a proud member of the United Way of Greater St. Louis for fifteen years. We are happy to support their 2013 campaign again this year and hope that you will join us. The United Way unites people of diverse backgrounds and interests who work together to strengthen health and human services in 16 counties in Missouri and Illinois. Annually, the United Way helps 1 million people by partnering with more than 170 nonprofits to provide valuable programs and services to families and individuals. The campaign kicks off September 2 through October 31.



*Buddy Builders
Easter Celebration*

CENTER STAFF

Administration

Deborah A. Naucke, Executive Director
Cassandra Cooke, Development Director
Stacey Hutchens, Development Associate
Tom Meyer, Accountant
Sharon Niethé, Office Manager
Flora Robinson, Facilities/Housekeeping

Program

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Family Support Services Coordinator
Nancy Crawford,
Physical Therapist
Karen Eckert,
*Teacher of the Visually Impaired &
Mobility Specialist*
Patti Griesbaum,
Occupational Therapist
Patricia Hamill,
Physical Therapist
Daniel Hurwitz,
GRADS Coordinator
Julie Johnson,
Teacher of the Visually Impaired
Christine Krewow,
Speech Therapist
Becky Lambert,
*Teacher of the Visually Impaired &
Mobility Specialist*
Calla Massman,
GRADS Facilitator
Lisa Rohr,
Early Intervention Program Coordinator
Margaret Russell,
Occupational Therapist
Jo Russell-Brown,
Teacher of the Visually Impaired
Lindsay Wayne,
*Teacher of the Visually Impaired &
Mobility Specialist*

In Memoriam



This issue of **INSIGHTS** is dedicated to the memory of

Francis Grindler Anstett

Delta Gamma-Iota
University of Illinois
1942

For her years of dedicated service and support to the Delta Gamma Center.

Summer Fun at the Playground

STAY CONNECTED

by Rebecca Lambert

M.S. Ed., Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist

Many families enjoy playing at their neighborhood playground. Here are some helpful hints to explore these popular play areas with your little ones.

Move around the entire play area, exploring the variety of openings. Locate steps or ladders that your child can climb on and spend time just moving up and down them (sitting, crawling, stepping) so that they are comfortable enough to do it themselves with you nearby.

Give your child a verbal account of what they are walking on or coming up to. For example, "Here are the tire chips. They are kind of springy when we step on them. We will need to take a few steps on the chips before we can get to the slide".

Get on the equipment yourself, when possible. Your child will feel safer if you are experiencing this with them. Once the child is familiar with the equipment, you can watch from outside the bars, etc.

If your child is using a cane or precane device, be sure to take it with you. Exploring the play areas with the cane can really help to familiarize your child with identifying a change in surface.

When locating swings, have your child use his/her "bumpers" to locate the poles, seats, or chains. The bumpers are their arms. Hold them up (with palms facing out) in front of their face and head for protection. Walk slowly so that there is time for the arm to react, avoiding a bump on the head. Once the child has located the swing, let them feel the chains and seat. When you start swinging, include words that describe how they are moving, such as "back and forth" and "forward/backward", making sure you are saying the appropriate word for the movement.

Swinging is an excellent time to work on communication skills. Play a stop/start game with your child having them indicate to you that they want more by verbalizing, signing, or asking, using phrases or sentences. Be sure to model good sentences for your child no matter what their communication level may be.

The playground is considered a natural environment. Please ask your teacher, physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, or O&M Specialist to meet you at your favorite park as a home visit if you would like some specific questions answered for your family.

Have you moved or need to change your contact information? Can we update our records and include you in our email updates?

If so, please notify Stacey Hutchens, Development Associate, at 314.776.1300 ext. 108 or shutchens@dgckids.org



Become a fan of the Delta Gamma Center for Children with Visual Impairments and get updates on what's happening at the Center.



Let us know what you are up to. Give us a Tweet @DGCKids.

DGCKIDS.ORG

For information regarding family support, early intervention services, and upcoming programs, check out our web page.



To make a secure donation to the Delta Gamma Center, please visit www.dgckids.org/support/

Thank **YOU** for your Support!

Run For Sight 2013

We had a successful event, despite the less than perfect weather on May 5th. We hosted nearly a thousand runners and walkers of all ages and skill levels. Our family teams came out in droves to support the event (43 teams).

Fredbird, Louie the Blues Bear, Ronald McDonald, and John F. Kennedy High School Band from Wisconsin were also in attendance for this fun-filled morning at Union Station.

The Family Teams are the heart of the Run For Sight!

Our top five teams were:

- Team A {Squared}
- Wyatt's Warriors
- Team Margaret
- Olivia's Gang
- Team Supergirl Sofia

Special thanks to all the fundraising teams for their hard work and support!



Louie and Fredbird
@ Union Station

Mark Your Calendars



Fashion Show and Luncheon
Wednesday, August 28, 2013
10:30 am to 2:30 pm
Forest Hills Country Club

"TOGETHER WE RIDE"
Saturday, August 31, 2013
A FREE event
uniting cyclists of all abilities
9:30 AM
Francis Park



Featuring tandem & adapted cyclists and local celebrities on the race course of The Staenberg Group GATEWAY CUP

For More Information Contact Stacey Hutchens at
314.776.1300 ext. 108 or shutchens@dgckids.org

Our Community Heros!

FOUNDATIONS/ORGANIZATIONS

AT&T Employee Giving Campaign
Cardinals Care
Cardinal Foundation of Ohio, The
Crawford Taylor Foundation
Delta Gamma Foundation
E. Reuben & Gladys Flora Grant Char. Trust
Emerson Charitable Trust
George Von Hoffman Foundation
J.A. Glynn and Co.
Jordan Charitable Foundation
JST Charitable Fund
Mimi Fishman Foundation
Pott Foundation, The
St. Louis Christmas Carols Association
Stupp Bros. Bridge & Iron Co. Foundation
Tilles Foundation, The
United Way of Greater St. Louis
U.S. Association for Blind Athletes
Variety, The Children's Charity of St. Louis
Verizon Foundation
Webb Foundation

CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS

Beaufort Lions Club
Chesterfield Lions Activity Fund
Columbian Charities of Missouri
Concord Lions
District 26M2 Lions Eye Foundation
House Springs Lions Club
Lions Club of Webster Groves
Lord of Life Vision Screening
Maplewood Lions Club
Our Lady of Snows Catholic Mission
Salem Met Vision Screening
Webster Groves Lions Club
West County Ophthalmology, Inc.
Wildwood Area Lions Club

CORPORATIONS

2e Creative
Lighthouse for the Blind - St. Louis
McCarthy Building Companies
Strategic Technology Group

Joshua's Journey

by David Fields

They say a journey begins with a single step, but ours began with a single stumble. As the 2013 Delta Gamma Center *Run for Sight* approached, Joshua came to me and asked to run the 5k portion of the race. Being the parent of a child with visual impairments, as many of you may know, it is never easy. There are times I want to put him in a bubble to protect him from any potential pitfalls, that would be me limiting his ability to soar; so I said yes.

My first thought was how I would protect him with all of those runners around us. Joshua simply held up a scarf and said, "I'll just hold on to one end, and you take the other." So we set out on a Sunday afternoon to run a 5k at a local park. He took one end of the scarf and I held the other as we took off running. Not even five seconds into our run we collided, nearly falling to the ground, but managed to keep going. Both of us ran the entire 5k without stopping, and with every step Joshua and I began to develop a rhythm together.

Stepping back a bit, I remember the day we were told Joshua would never see, and that he would be forever limited in the things he was able to do. Fast forward to the day of the 2013 Delta Gamma Center *Run for Sight*, with Joshua and I holding our guide rope ready for the run. In that moment all the surgeries, all the challenges, and all the obstacles were just a footstool to a greater truth; we may have stumbled at different points along the way, but we are still getting ready to run.

Throughout the run we challenged each other, but as we approached the end of the race I let Joshua spend some time running with my sister. I did that for a number of reasons, but one of the most important was that I would be able to watch Joshua cross the finish line on his own. As he came around that last turn, I watched as he let go of that rope and just ran. He was not worried about visual impairments, and there were no limitations. He was just a boy running a race! As he crossed the finish line, there was a look of complete joy and accomplishment.

The power of the human spirit is a wonderful thing, and this journey that began with a single stumble has served as an incredible reminder to me of just that! The Delta Gamma Center has done so much for so many individuals with visual impairments, but one of the greatest things they have helped to give my son Joshua is the belief that he can do **ANYTHING!**

What I hope Joshua and other people with visual impairments realize is that events like the Delta Gamma Center *Run for Sight* inspire all of us to be better because there is so much beauty in watching people embrace life! This experience with Joshua taught me the run was not about visual impairments at all, rather, celebrating the life my son is blessed to live. He inspired me, as he has done since the day I first held him in my arms. I thank God for the opportunity he has given me to have such an incredible young man in my life. Whether he stumbles one time, or a million times more, I know he will keep running. It's my hope that we cling to the many stories of inspiration those served by the Delta Gamma Center provide, because they serve to inspire all of us to be better citizens of the world!

Remember...Just keep running!



Joshua Fields

Special People Special Ways

by *Daniel Hurwitz*

Throughout the school year, our youngest GRADS group, Explorers, meets each month to sing, read, swing, laugh and play together. During our meetings the preschool-aged children in Explorers work on individual social skills, participation and independence goals with the generous support of our energetic volunteer staff. Explorers volunteers include: music therapists, ophthalmology students, parents of children who have gone through the GRADS program, and members of the Delta Gamma Fraternity.



This Spring the Explorers group had the special treat of hosting a group of children from St. Peter's Catholic School. The children from St. Peter's (and two mothers) presented two fantastic multi-sensory lessons and spent the evening playing with the Explorers. Children from the Explorers group had the chance to act as gracious hosts, while the kids from St. Peter's had the chance to learn how to help some of our Explorers navigate the Delta Gamma Center and participate in group games and art projects. Everyone had so much fun that our friends from St. Peter's came back three months in a row.

EYEdea

(Early Years Education Doing Everyday Activities)

by *Jo Russell-Brown*
Teacher of the Visually Impaired

Hey Early Intervention Families! Summer can be a great time to learn about everyday things in a fun, new way. Try these ideas!

Make a Concept Box (a shoe box works great) and introduce a new object each week that is associated with your child's routines, e.g., a wash cloth for bath, diaper for changing, bib for mealtime, spoon for eating, bottle/cup for drinking, keys for car outings, pinwheel for stroller rides, ball for play, etc. This is a great way to build your child's visual/tactile vocabulary, increase concept development, as well as work on shift of gaze and communication by offering choices with these familiar objects.

If your child already uses object cues with routines, you can make a Curiosity Box instead. Have fun introducing something new to your child each week and place it in the box. You can build your child's curiosity to anticipate the new object and have fun touching the items discovered in past weeks. Curiosity doesn't always come naturally for our children with visual impairments so this is a great way to help them develop an interest in discovery. Your child learns best by being up-close and personal while having hands-on experiences with the real thing. Be creative and make this activity your own. Decide what you'd like to use to pique your child's interest. Remember the world's full of amazing things, all at your child's fingertips!

Need another "EYEdea"? Introduce one of these concepts a week and put the word, color or shape on your refrigerator to remind the entire family to join the fun! For example, who can find the most **red** things during **Red Week** or how many round things do you encounter in a day for Circle Week?

Here are some ideas for different concepts: colors; shapes; orientation & mobility concepts- out, in, on, off, up, down, over, under, above, below, beside, next to, in front of, behind, right, left.

Have Fun!!!



Richie Tienter

Putting His Skills To The Test



by Ann Tienter



Richie has been involved with the Delta Gamma Center since 2005 when Jo Russell-Brown conducted his first functional vision assessment. Since then Ritchie has been involved with Buddy Builders, Explorers and Challengers. Delta Gamma Center has been like a second family to us.

Richie attended the Braille Challenge Regionals for the first time last year, and took third place in the apprentice division. This year, at Missouri School for the Blind, he was able to achieve first place in the apprentice division. His scores were then compared to all others in the apprentice division and we were told that he was one of the top twelve scorers in the apprentice division in the nation. He is one of 60 students to qualify. We have been told that Richie is the first Special School District student to qualify EVER!

“This competition is unique in that it tests a very specific skill. It gives us an opportunity to bring the issue of literacy for blind children to the attention of the public,” said Nancy Niebrugge, director of The Braille Challenge. “Most of the participants who make it to the national competition are the only blind students in their school. They go through their entire lives being the exception. The Braille Challenge gives them the opportunity to build camaraderie among kids who have shared similar life experiences.”

On June 22nd we travelled to the Braille Institute in Los Angeles for the National Challenge. It was an amazing experience where Richie made many new friends whom he intends to be pen-pals with.

iPad App Review: Peek-A-Boo Barn

by Julie Johnson
Teacher of the Visually Impaired

Peek-A-Boo Barn, created by Night and Studios for Android and Mac systems, was developed for all infants and toddlers ages 0-3. This app has proven to be extremely popular among families and professionals serving children with visual impairments. A key research expert in the field of visual impairments, Christine Roman, rated Peek-A-Boo Barn in the top ten apps available for infants and toddlers with visual impairments, especially cortical visual impairment. An important feature of the app is the visual presentation of the big, red barn in the center of the page. In order for the child to open the barn door, the child has to maintain visual attention on the red barn, bring his or her hands to mid-line and touch the screen. This can be an extremely challenging task for an infant or toddler with a visual impairment. However, since Peek-A-Boo barn is interactive and tells a sequential story, it holds the attention of many infants and toddlers so they can continue to work on their therapy routines and still have fun. Every time the child touches the screen to open the barn door, a farm animal appears with a corresponding voice reciting the name of the animal. Speech Language Pathologists have also commented that the child's voiceover feature on the app is ideal because it models age appropriate speech and language development for the infant and toddlers, especially those with special needs.





**Delta Gamma Center for Children
with Visual Impairments
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Richmond Heights, MO 63117**

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Leave A Legacy



We invite you to leave your legacy by making a planned gift to the Center. There are a variety of gift options to help you find the type of gift that is right for you. Talk with your financial advisor about your IRA beneficiary designations and how to leave a gift to the Center in your will.

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