



East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind
500 N. Bois D' Arc
Tyler, TX 75702

Empowering blind Americans through rehabilitation, education, training and employment



The Lighthouse

Official publication of the East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind

www.tylerlighthouse.org

PATH & Lighthouse Partnership to Save Sight

PATH and The Lighthouse recently announced the Saving Sight partnership to provide free eye exams, eyeglasses and low vision aids for those who cannot afford them in our community. Lighthouse Director of Community Relations, Melissa Lanier, is asking employees to tell family and friends about the Saving Sight Program.

“While employees have the benefits and programs of the Lighthouse, they may know someone with a visual disability who is not as fortunate. Some eye conditions left untreated can lead to serious complications such as vision loss and blindness. Early intervention through a free eye exam offered by the Saving Sight program is a great preventative measure” says Lanier.

According to PATH’s 2010 Community Assessment, nearly 500 of their clients needed but were unable to pay for eye exams which provide the front line of defense in preventing and correcting debilitating eye disorders. The Lighthouse Rehabilitative Services Division over the last 12 months assisted over 200 clients with blind/low vision aids valued at over \$145,000. The program officially starts September 1, 2011. Residents of Smith County currently not on Medicaid can contact PATH to determine eligibility for eye care services. East Texans in need of adaptive equipment may apply for grants to assist with low vision aids available through The Lighthouse.

Corporations and individuals can make donations to Saving Sight online at www.TylerLighthouse.org. The Saving Sight Golf Tournament to benefit PATH & The Lighthouse is scheduled for September 26, 2011 with special guest, Jeremy Poincenot, who is the 2010 International Blind Golf Association Champion. He lost his central vision at 19 to a rare genetic disorder called Leber’s Hereditary Optic Neuropathy (LHON).

The San Diego State college student is excited to play golf with The Lighthouse and will visit personally with Lighthouse employees at our Bois d’Arc location on the morning of September 27th.




Jeremy Poincenot: 2010-11 International Blind Golf Association Champion

UPCOMING EVENTS

- September 26th - Saving Sight Golf Tournament
- September 27th - Jeremy Poincenot meets with Lighthouse employees at Horizon Industries
- October 15th - White Cane Day

Tyler Lighthouse is now on Facebook!



We want to share all the great things happening at the Lighthouse with you! Visit our page and become a fan for updates on our divisions, employee highlights and pictures from events. Tell a friend! 

Check out our company website for pictures of employees and recent events at www.tylerlighthouse.org



www.tylerlighthouse.org

Kay Lee's Eyes

The Mission and You

Kay Lee Foster had been spending most of her time at her group home Tyler hiding from the public view. Born premature, 28 year-old Kay Lee lost her sight after being administered too much oxygen. Finally, after a series of chronic and painful infections which doctors said would only return, her eyes were removed. She thought Medicaid would replace her eyes with prostheses, but the claim was denied because she is over 21 and insertion of the artificial eyes is considered a cosmetic procedure.

Conscience of her appearance and fearful she seemed scary to others, Kay Lee began to stay home making only necessary trips to places like work. During this period she was referred to Lighthouse Rehabilitative Services to learn independent living skills. Once independent living trainer Cathy Hooper found out about Kay Lee's situation things began to happen quickly. After a consultation with Terry Trawnik, an East Texas Ocularist who works at the Lighthouse one day per week, it was determined that Kay Lee's window of opportunity was quickly closing. Since so much time had gone by since the removal of her eyes proper placement of the prostheses was becoming more difficult. Terry volunteered his services for free if some way to cover the cost of the prostheses could be found. Working with Kay Lee's case worker, Cathy immediately processed an Adaptive Equipment Grant application of \$2,500 for her which was quickly approved by the Lighthouse.

On August 3rd, 2011, Trawnik successfully inserted the prosthesis. Kay Lee chose the color blue which happens to also represent her favorite sports team, The Texas Rangers. She's happy and more confident now than ever.

Kay Lee could not have gotten her 'new eyes' without the support of the programs at The Lighthouse. Thank you, Lighthouse!

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Newsletter produced by The Lighthouse



Kay Lee also made some new friends with members of the local media who followed her story from the day of measurements to insertion. Pictured here: CBS 19 Chief Photographer Alan Casper, Kay Lee Foster, Tyler Morning Telegraph Reporter Kenneth Dean, Lighthouse employee Kathy Hooper and Tyler Morning Telegraph Chief Photographer Jaime Carrero

Keeping the Vision: Saving Sight

Lighthouse Employee Shares Story on Importance of Eye Exams

By Michelle Boyd

"Dad, look up there at all those stars," I said as I reached to hand him another tomato plant from our small garden in East Texas.

"Honey," he answered back, "there are no stars right now-it's too early in the day. Maybe, you need to go in, the sun may be getting to you."

It was about 2 p.m. on my dad's day off in the summer time and we were doing what he loved in his spare time, gardening and spending time with family. I was about nine and a half years old and I spent most of my time following my dad. If he wasn't working at home, he was working as a janitor for a hospital, mowing lawns or doing a special event. With eight other siblings, I enjoyed the outdoors and time with my dad more. I enjoyed his stories and he valued quality time with family. Even as a child, I understood how much he really loved and cared for his family and wanted to be able to provide for them.



Michelle Boyd
 Vocational Trainer

However, this day, I was not able to express that these stars or spots seemed to have always been there and they wouldn't go away. This day was different, the spots were more intense, but I was still able to see. I believed that if I saw them, others did to. Throughout my education, I suffered greatly because I tried to memorize everything and most of my life, I struggled in areas of reading, because I had to string my words and thoughts together based on what I could see or not see. Yet, I loved learning. These stars or spots were never examined or diagnosed throughout my school years and even undergraduate years. After graduating from Dallas Baptist University and working at an investment firm outside Dallas, I was driving home at night when everything went blurry.

I kept saying to myself, "If I can just get home, I'll go to the doctor tomorrow!"

The next day, I didn't hesitate. I went to see an eye doctor who referred me to a specialist who diagnosed me with Stargardt's disease. The specialist explained that my condition was not correctable, but I could slow down the process by taking care of the sight that remained. Although there is no cure, I wonder how a diagnosis could have made school less of a struggle. Since that diagnosis, I have continued my education with a Master of Social Work, teaching certificate and more importantly obtained employment at the East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind as a Vocational Training Manager.

"I have lost some sight, not my vision!"

Meet Jeremy Poincenot: World's Top Blind Golf Player

As a member of America's blind community: he takes time out to tell us what motivates him to play championship golf

Q. You lost your sight at the age of 19 to Leber's Hereditary Optic Neuropathy (LHON) while a Sophomore at San Diego State University. As a teenager in a fraternity studying International Business who could no longer drive: how did you overcome the struggle of losing your sight?

A. I was devastated by the experience. I never thought you could go legally blind at such a young age, but it was through the help of family, friends and my fraternity that I was able to persevere. I realized that things could always be worse, and it was then that I made the choice not to sulk about my situation any more and instead to be positive.

Q. In news articles you said you were depressed after the diagnosis and learning you would never recover you put your golf clubs down. What motivated you to pick them back up?

A. When I was fully sighted I didn't like slow play on the golf course, so I thought that playing golf would definitely be slow play. After a while I decided to give it a chance and found that I could keep pace and actually compete with the fully sighted. I played 18 holes with my dad who lined me up, and I had so much fun that I've continually worked on it to get better, and I'm still hooked on the game of golf.

Q. What sports are you currently involved in now?

A. Blind golf and tandem biking. I've also gone skydiving three times since losing my sight, I ran a half marathon, and I play basketball from time to time.

Q. After going blind, you stayed at San Diego State University where you are currently studying Business/Entrepreneurship. When will you graduate and what do you plan to do after you do so?

A. I will graduate in 2013. I plan to become a motivational speaker and raise awareness of LHON, and hopefully help find a cure for this genetic disease that caused me to go blind and that threatens my mom, sister and brother with the same outcome.

Q. You will meet our workers here at The Lighthouse after the tournament on Tuesday. Some work in our plant, others work in rehabilitative services or customer service, but we are connected through the same mission: empowering the blind and those with low vision. How has becoming blind empowered you?

A. Since I lost my sight to a disease that has no treatment and no cure, it's given me a purpose in life; to raise as much money and awareness as possible to find a cure for LHON. It's caused me to realize that I shouldn't take things for granted. When I was fully sighted, I was lazier, but now I'm much more pro-active and go out and do what I want to do. I've done much more in the past few years since I became legally blind than I did during the first 19 years of my life.



Jeremy Poincenot

White Cane Training Gives Local Daycare Kids New View

*By Guest Columnist:
Jarrett Gist, Lighthouse Orientation & Mobility Specialist*

27 eager eyes and busy bodies from Shiloh Road Learning Center greeted us at Lighthouse Client Services on Front Street Thursday July 29th. The kids were there to tour as part of the Department of Rehabilitation's Summer Youth Programs to increase blindness awareness. The tours last about 45 minutes and feature all services offered through the Lighthouse. Orientation and mobility, Braille, independent living and technology were key topics covered on the tours. Braille demonstrations were given to show how reading and writing are achieved along with non visual techniques for cooking. Magnification devices, talking computers and color identifiers were just some of the devices used to show how technology is utilized for helping people who are blind navigate the internet, read bills and coordinate their clothes. Children were also given the opportunity to travel under blindfold with the use of a white cane to gain an understanding of the independence that it provides.

I was thrilled to see how excited they got when it came time for travel with the white cane. My hope is that they realize how difficult yet doable it is and how with the right training and tools you can do just about anything you set your mind to. What better way to truly understand something than to experience it first hand. The children were only under blindfold for a short time but they learned more from this experience than I could have taught by just trying to explain. People are afraid of what they do not understand. To find that common ground was the goal, to put yourself in someone else's shoes.



Lighthouse Employees at Work

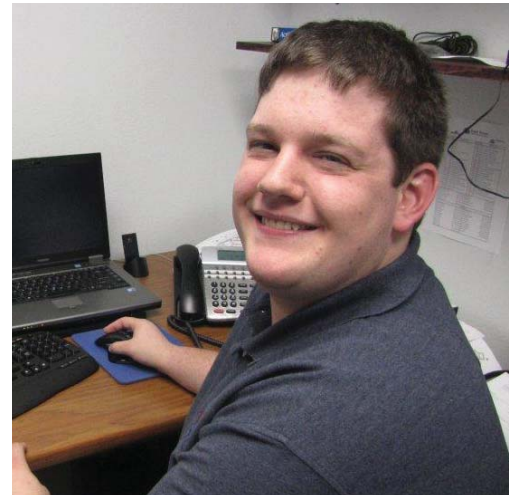
NEW FACES



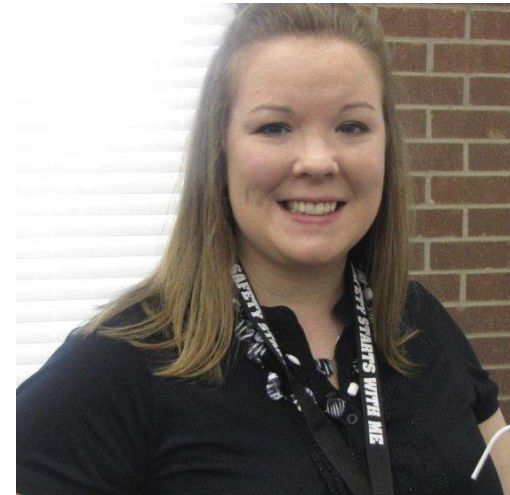
Daniel Toole
Machine Operator



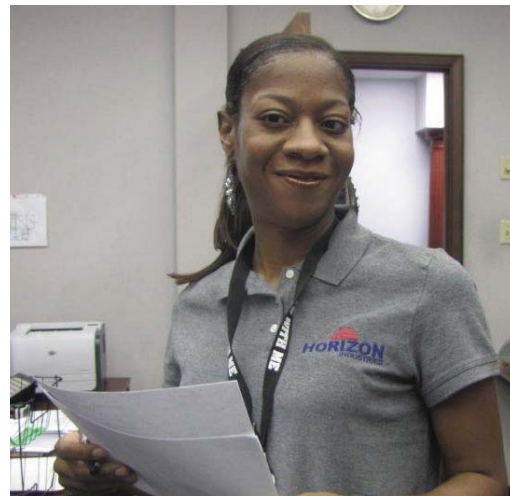
Habi Diallo
Accounts Receivable



Bryan Cross
Network Administrator



Lisa Hodde
Sales Associate



Markita Lane
Customer Service Manager



Gary Kellar
Quality Control



Stephen Austin
Machine Operator



Jermaine Henderson
Machine Operator



David Apperley - IT Dir.
Melissa Lanier - PR Dir.



Pamela Parker
Accounts Payable



Summer Owens
Marketing Associate



Dustin Smith
Maintenance

Leanne Peel- Lead Auditor Certified



On June 17th Leanne Peel successfully completed the Quality Management Systems Lead Auditor Training Course for ISO 9001: 2008. Leanne will now begin pulling together and training an internal audit team for Horizon, which will increase the operational strength of the organization.

Great Job Leanne!!!



Lighthouse Employees at Play....

Blind Beep Baseball: Another Homerun for the Tyler Tigers

Workers from The Lighthouse are back on the job after a trip to Indiana for the Blind Beep Baseball Association's 2011 World Series. The Tyler Tigers beat the Stockton Stingrays and the New Jersey Fighting Lions. The Lighthouse sponsored the Tigers this year with a \$3000 donation to help them get to Indiana and back for the big game!

The Blind Beep Baseball Breast Cancer Awareness Day will be held October 22 at 11:00am on the John Tyler football practice field. Featured speakers from Trinity Mother Frances, Lighthouse Rehabilitative Services and Horizon Industries will make presentations. The Tyler Tigers will match up against the Lone Star Roadrunners of Ft. Worth with Mayor Barbara Bass throwing out the first pitch at 12:00. GO TIGERS!



Elzie Haskett at bat and Reginald Merrick catching



First Row: Lanashia Reed, Alexis Brown, Reginald Merrick, Christian Merrick, Larry Reed, Rosie Reed. Second row: Juliet Traylor, Ke'Andrial Reed, Phillip Traylor, Cazzie Kirk, Jarmael Jones, Genesis Merrick, Bralio Thorne, Elzie Haskett, Dorothy Leechman