A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

This year at the Foundation for Blind Children, we find ourselves one year closer in the pursuit of accomplishing our vision, “making vision loss a diagnosis and not a disability.” This valiant pursuit could not be possible without the support of our community, our Board of Trustees, and the staff of FBC, who are relentless in their efforts to serve, educate, and empower our students.

This is a great time to reflect on the past 12 months and give thanks. This year, I am especially thankful for the management, staff, educators, doctors and nurses who serve our blind community. Every time I walk through the doors of FBC, I am reminded of the incredible services we provide and the lives we touch each day.

In November, I had the privilege of joining the Blind Buccaneers on a journey to take 12 blind students on a sailing adventure to circumnavigate the Spanish Virgin Islands. The experience will forever change my life. Watching our students take on this challenge with grit, eagerness and an overwhelming attitude of “I can accomplish anything,” was awe-inspiring.

The Blind Buccaneers went from no sailing experience to competing in a regatta at Lake Pleasant, to navigating over 400 nautical miles in the Caribbean, in only a matter of months. This journey was no easy feat! FBC students who participated in this adventure have a story of a lifetime, and the confidence to say “Yes I Can,” to any challenge that comes their way.

As for the adult guides who were able to join them, we too, have a lifelong memory, many new friends, and a story. A story that will touch the hearts of many and inspire others to join in the pursuit of our mission.

Thank you for your continued support and for allowing me to be a part of this wonderful journey.

Steve Pope
President

2018 YEAR IN REVIEW

FBC hosts the Braille Institute’s 4th annual SW Regional Cane Quest

Natasha Castles of Live 101.5 hosts the 3rd annual CaneQuest FBC Fashion Show

The Board of Visitors have chosen FBC as the beneficiary of the annual Care Card fundraising campaign

Blind Buccaneers: 12 blind teenagers sailed the Spanish Virgin Islands on a six day adventure at sea

Night for Sight: Long time FBC supporter Tara Hitchcock is presented with the Visionary Award of Night for Sight

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Marc Ashton
Chief Executive Officer
Dr. Lisa Chiles
Optometrist
Cody Franklin
Youth & Family Services Director
Jared Kittelson
Educational Services Director
Jared Leslie
Media Center Director
Julie Oliver
Adult & Transition Services Director
Steve Poulouki
Communications & Development Director
Barbra Smith
Chief of Staff

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Arizona Coyotes Foundation
All About People
University of Arizona College of Medicine
Kitchell
LeaseHawk
Nomih’s Marketing
Gammage & Burnham, P.C.
Donor Network of Arizona

Henry Horne
Dorn Homes, Inc.
Western Window Systems
Jennings, Strouss & Salmon
Snell & Wilmer LLP
Oracle / NetSuite
Lockton Companies

CaneQuest
FBC hosts the Braille Institute’s 4th annual SW Regional Cane Quest

Million Dollar Teacher Project
FBC teachers are honored with lunch, courtesy of the Million Dollar Teacher Project

Care Card
The Board of Visitors have chosen FBC as the beneficiary of the annual Care Card fundraising campaign

Night for Sight
Long time FBC supporter Tara Hitchcock is presented with the Visionary Award of Night for Sight

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Jessica was born with Leber’s Congenital Amaurosis, an inherited degenerative disease characterized by severe loss of vision at birth. Jessica has participated in SHARP (sports, habilitation, arts, and recreation program) for the last four years. This year, her mom signed her up for SHARP summer camp.

Being quiet and shy, she almost changed her mind about camp. Much to the staff’s surprise, Jessica volunteered to participate in a talent show during the program. This quiet little girl stood up in front of 45 friends and FBC staff members and brought the house down with her comedy routine. Her confidence grew with each joke, and soon she was laughing along with her audience. Jessica will take her newfound confidence with her as she starts the 4th grade in the fall.

Ian was adopted from Ethiopia when he was two years old. His mother and father found him alone and crying in a secluded room on a trip to adopt two of their other children. Ian’s mother asked to hold him and knew immediately that he was meant to come home with them.

At three years old, Ian began preschool at FBC and remained here for three years. He went from scooting to walking, and from using only a few words to having exchanges with adults. In his second year, Ian became more vocal and began showing everyone just how smart he was.

In his third year, Ian began using a braille writer and could visually recognize the letters of his name. He was a leader in the classroom and was ready for kindergarten.

He graduated preschool and transitioned to a general education classroom in a private school this past year. Go Ian!
In November, 12 FBC students, ages 14-19, sailed through squalls and high swells around the Spanish Virgin Islands. They Snuba’d to the ocean floor, swam with dolphins, saw sea turtles, barracuda, jellyfish and a shark. They jumped off boats, swam to the beaches, learned to paddle board, kayak, cook, clean and even swab decks. But everyone learned so much more. Guides learned to be the eyes of others while overcoming their own fears. Students learned to overcome fears and accomplish goals of all sizes - learning to be vulnerable and brave all at once.

These students reminded us how hard it is to be a teenager, growing up with limited vision. They told stories of loneliness, bullying, abandonment and injustice. Exposing the most fragile parts of their soul for everyone to behold. They all cried, but every student finished this journey with a new story - a story of triumph, success and pride.

FBC does these challenge events to give the kids an opportunity to grow and learn through adversity, and it works. These students are now different with newfound confidence, strength, and wisdom. There is a certain aura that comes from believing you are fragile and then discovering your hidden strengths. Please celebrate with us and with these students when you see them next. They are special!
TO HAVE A WORLD WHERE VISION LOSS IS A DIAGNOSIS, NOT A DISABILITY.