ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD

After even a few minutes with Dr. Lenora Brinson you know she is a natural leader, a born builder of bigger things. Her career as a realtor was ended when glaucoma left her severely visually impaired and in 1997, “I got my first disability check and began to weep and mourn. I knew I had to reinvent myself.” She became a licensed mortgage broker, an ordained pastor and has over 12 years of experience as a life coach. But Lenora could not see the keyboard or use the computer. She came to the Lighthouse of Broward for computer training. “Now I can do everything, even PowerPoint.”

Lenora founded Issachar, Inc., a substance abuse recovery program and career center that focuses on getting people with high level skills and a disability into good-paying jobs. Her company receives referrals from United Way, Salvation Army, Red Cross and FEMA and she is listed on My Florida Marketplace so that she can apply for State contracts.

Her own struggles have made her truly empathetic to people who have faced real hardships. “It concerns me very much that people don’t give up on life, don’t commit suicide, don’t do drugs or alcohol,” she says, “and I did not like the fact that blind people with advanced degrees were being hired at minimum wage.” At Issachar, her entire team of life coaches are visually impaired, and all have received services at Lighthouse of Broward.

(continued on page 4)

TECHNOLOGY REPORT: BrailleNote Brings Tablet Technology to the Fingertips of Visually Impaired.

Katherine Espinosa (pictured left,) is using the BrailleNote at the Lighthouse of Broward. She can write documents, make contact lists, email, use the web browser and read books, much like a Kindle or iPad. The difference being instead of a screen, below the keyboard is a line of “refreshable braille.” These plastic pins raise and lower to form the braille letters in the document, acting as the “screen” for this computer.
Message from the Executive Director

Technology - Only Part of the Story

I originally thought this edition was going to be all about “Technology and the Workplace.” Then I met Dr. Lenora Brinson, a Lighthouse of Broward graduate and local entrepreneur. Once again, I was reminded that the technical skills taught at the Lighthouse are only part of the story. Equally important is the emotional support from highly skilled, empathic case managers. Lenora and her team, (read the full story on page 4,) praise Alyssa Davis, Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, who led their support group – (they took it twice!) and our staff with visual impairments, who serve as role models, like Eric Barrette, Teacher of the Visually Impaired and La Shonda McDonald, Certified Vision Rehabilitation Teacher. I hear “Eric is my hero!” from so many LHOB clients and receive kudos for LaShonda’s ability to restore our clients keyboarding skills as “lightning fast.” ALL of the LHOB instructors convey unshakeable conviction. We believe confidence built through a succession of small successes will restore a blind person’s capacities to engage completely in school, work, family and community life.

Stories of confidence are all over this newsletter. Lenora has gone on to coach, train and empower many fellow Lighthouse graduates like: Avalon Conley, a Registered Nurse, who lost his job when he woke up one morning totally blind. Sheniqua Miller and Colleen Campbell now have degrees in Psychology from NSU. Ansel Davis ran the office for Florida State Representative Matthew Meadows and served on the Florida State Rehabilitation Council credits the Lighthouse and Lenora for helping him “bounce back.”

The Lighthouse is an incubator, a resource and network for amazing connections that bring quality and dignity to people’s lives. As Avalon put it so well, “I was lost before I found this place. The Lighthouse is a Godsend.”

Elly de Pre
Executive Director

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, Feb 9 - BFF Social Group – Valentine’s Day Fundraiser 12-2:30 p.m Call Sharon Meikle at 954-842-8828 for more details.

Saturday, Feb 13. Interfaith Group- Friendship, Dating & Romance with Dr. Francesca Marinaro & Dolores Hanley McDiarmid, 10:30am-2:30p.m. RSVP, 954-463-4217 ext. 135.

Thursday, Feb. 18 Alumni Association Fundraiser at Bobby Rubino’s. No meeting that day.

Friday, Feb. 26 - Book Club 10am-Noon. The Storied Life of A. J. Fikry by Gabrielle Zevin. Contact Ellen Meyers, chimeyers@yahoo.com

Friday, Feb. 26 – Braille Challenge for Kids and Teens. Contact Sam Kelly at 954-463-4217, ext. 118

Most Thursdays – Exercise and Healthy Choices with Bill. 10:00a.m.-Noon – RSVP by calling Dolores at 954-463-4217 ext.135

Most Tuesdays - Blinded Veterans Assoc. 9:59 am-11:30 am - Call Scott at 954-326-1706 and the BFF Social Group 1:00 pm-2:30 pm. Call 954-463-4217 for info.

The Lighthouse offers YOGA, Trivia Club and Movies – just to name a few. Call ext. 143 to hear a line up of all the events.
Dania Lions Club and Jim Silvernale—Working for a Cause

When Helen Keller charged Lions International, (a.k.a. The Lions Clubs) to become “Knights of the Blind,” in 1917, she could never have imagined the enormous impact they would make on services, even now almost 100 years later. And no club is a finer example of the Lions’ Motto: “We Serve” than Dania Lions Club.

Lighthouse of Broward has benefitted year in and year out from their generosity. At every Lighthouse event—Jazz Concerts, Eggstravaganza or Holiday parties for the kids—they are there. Any request—a child needing an eye exam or special glasses—they are there.

President Jim Silvernale and VP, Carmen Camacho are proud of the club. “Our membership is all across the board—business owners, professionals, blue collar, white collar, retirees,” says Jim, “but they did not join to build their business, they joined to have a good time helping people.” Carmen adds, “this is way more than a club, it is a family. Everybody always volunteers, for whoever needs us.”

The Dania Lions are community service clubs, dedicated to the idea that the men and women who live in a community are in the best position to know who needs help and why. More than 44,000 strong, these local clubs are part of the world's largest service organization, with 1.4 million members serving in more than 185 countries and areas. The group is both non-political and non-sectarian. Lions are now best known for their sight-related programs, including, SightFirst, the world's largest blindness prevention program.

Jim, Carmen, as well as, many Dania Club members have won the highest International Lions honor: The Melvin Jones Award. Jim sums it up this way: “Your life is empty if you don’t help.”

Dee Nelson, (pictured left,) recently retired from a career as a counselor in Broward County Public Schools. She has embarked on a new career—baker!

To keep in touch with customers, she is learning to use the iPhone with special commands that make it accessible to her as a totally blind person. Dee also has taught Braille at the Lighthouse. Dee is featured on our latest video: Check it out at www.LHOB.org

Richard Nieves, Certified Vision Rehab Teacher at the Lighthouse of Broward helps Dee Nelson master the iPhone.
Lunch and Learn

Individuals and Groups are welcome to tour the Lighthouse of Broward! In less than an hour you can see some of what we do!

Technology – Sensory Garden – Babies Room

To tour the Lighthouse of Broward, contact Jose Lopez at 954-463-4217, ext. 141.

All Things Work Together for Good  (continued from page 1.)

Avalon Conley was a Registered Nurse working for 17 different insurance companies as a complex case manager, but when he woke up one morning totally blind, in early 2015, he lost his job. Glaucoma treatments could not control this insidious eye disease. “I was like a pinball bouncing off the walls. I was lost before I found this place. The Lighthouse is a Godsend.” With an 11 year old daughter to support, and losing his home, Avalon knew he had to regain his quality of life. “It takes a lot to bounce back” and he and Lenora both credit LHOB, Case Manager, Alyssa Davis with “pushing us to confront our feelings so we could be strong.” Now they not only coach Issachar’s clients but are true role models, “coming from a place of empathy.”

Colleen Campbell recently graduated from Nova Southeastern University with a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology. Colleen has Retinitis Pigmentosa, a degenerative eye disease. Eric Barrette, a Computer Teacher, introduced Colleen to Lenora. “I would still be stuck looking for a job if it wasn’t for Lenora’s coaching,” adds Colleen.

Like Colleen, Ansel Davis has had Retinitis Pigmentosa from birth, and has dealt with a succession of careers. He ran the office for Florida State Rep. Matthew Meadows, has 20 years of customer service experience and worked as a chef at the Breakers in Fort Lauderdale. He served on the State Rehabilitation Council for years. He also is an avid Beepball player, an adaptation of baseball for blind and blind-folded sighted players, and is looking to build a local team. Palm Beach will host the International World Series in 2017.

Sheniqua Miller, who started in Lighthouse’s TeenLIFE program in 2005 and now has graduated from NSU with a Master’s degree in psychology, also was tapped by Lenora. She is getting a chance to put into practice ideas she developed for both disabled individuals and teens aging out of foster care, by working with ChildNet’s Independent Living program.

Lenora says, “When you come to the Lighthouse, it is an extension of home. Losing my vision made me a better person. I used to be so selfish. I like me, now.” Her business is a major contributor to the Lighthouse Alumni Association, which raises funds for instructors to attend conferences for professional growth.

But most of all she and her team feel that with vision impairment, “we lose our quality of life.” Our goal is to regain that “quality” and that is what they found at the Lighthouse of Broward.

You can contact Issachar’s Recovery Center: Lenora@myrecoveryTamarac.com or toll-free 855-756-1097; and the Vocational Career Center at admin@TamaracVCC.com or 855-962-7613