Each of these veterans has a special story and each of them came to LHOB for our services.

**Hamilton Griffin – I always liked my independence**

Hamilton Griffin has always been a planner and he has always had a love for the water and boating. So when he reached young adulthood and was certain that he would be drafted for the Korean War, he applied for the Naval Reserve and attended Officer Candidate School while getting his degree at Yale. He went on to serve on a destroyer escort in Norfolk, Virginia and in Italy and England, where he witnessed the devastation and did recovery work in post-war Europe.

“I’ve been a planner all my life, because I always liked my independence.” But when he was diagnosed with Glaucoma, Hamilton felt “the need to find a place he could turn to.” Planning ahead once again, he visited the Lighthouse of Broward before he was declared legally blind.

As a result, “the Lighthouse was there when I needed it.” When it became necessary, Hamilton started in the Lighthouse’s Vital Living Program. “The Lighthouse definitely was one big saving grace. And it helped a lot to be with others with similar vision problems.”

With the help of assistive devices that he got at the Lighthouse, Hamilton enjoys the activities that so many of us enjoy. He entertains friends and family, has season tickets to the opera, and uses a computer with the newest magnification aid, the DaVinci. Although Hamilton can no longer drive, he loves his mile and a half daily walks on the beach and “wears out the tip on my white cane every few weeks.”

This active, 83-year-old, who years ago planned how he would serve our country, is now planning to stay in his home thanks in part to the Lighthouse of Broward.

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Message from the Executive Director

Looking ahead a few weeks to Memorial Day inspired us to focus on supporting our veterans in this issue of The Visionary. It was an honor to speak to the four inspiring individuals featured, hearing their enthusiasm for life and their stories of pride and resilience. They all shared one common message: it is our duty to serve our country. They all wished that national service be required for everyone.

Getting out of my office is another value of writing this newsletter. I appreciate the incredible work of our staff so much more, hearing about their impact on the lives of people touched by our programs. Our services are provided both at our agency and, for those too frail to get to our facility, in people’s individual homes. For that reason, meeting Navy Veteran Richard Carté was a defining moment, because he has never set foot in the Lighthouse. His deep appreciation of the help he has gotten, from staff who went to his home, was sweet to hear. But it was the things he didn’t say and didn’t ask for, that are providing the foundation of the Lighthouse’s strategic imperative as the only provider of professional adjustment to blindness skills training and case management.

Like so many seniors served by the Lighthouse, he has a complex array of personal needs plus he is a full-time caregiver. His wife of 56 years had a stroke and uses a wheelchair. He is grateful that his daughter is supportive, but she lives up North. The Lighthouse strategic plan has set a goal to establish a geriatric case management program to serve as a bridge for people like Richard and his daughter to make sure the gaps are filled and daily needs are not neglected.

We at the Lighthouse are grateful for his service to our country, as we are for all veterans. Most of all we are inspired to do more, to improve, to grow and to keep our services relevant and comprehensive for all the people who seek our help.

Elly du Pré, DPA

Executive Director

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, April 25
Book club 10:00-12:00

Saturday, April 26
Yoga 10:00-12:00
Parent Meeting for Babies, Kids and Transition Clients.

MAY
Saturday, May 10
Yoga 10:00 – 12:00

Friday, May 16
Alumni Luncheon- Invite Only

OCTOBER
Saturday, October 4
“Blessing of the Animals” and “Essential Oils and your Pets/Service Animals” in the Lighthouse of Broward Sensory Garden.

Sunday, October 12
Experience a “Sukkot” from the Jewish Faith Tradition (Limited Space) in the Lighthouse of Broward Garden.

Friday, October 24
Share the Vision: Dining in the Dark 2014.

Friday, October 31 and Saturday, November 1
Autumn Market!

NEWS YOU CAN USE: A recorded message of the monthly newsletter including calendar of activities and other announcements is now available at EXT 143. Call the Lighthouse and when you hear the greeting, enter 143.
Encouraging others to get involved.

Ana was very impressed with the compassion and caring she received from all of the staff and enjoyed every class. “I can’t see faces, but I know in my heart that the staff is always smiling and is very devoted to their work, which cannot be an easy task.” After Ana’s experience, she says “I’m sorry and disappointed in myself that I didn’t attend the Lighthouse sooner.”

When Ana Fernandez first came to the Lighthouse of Broward, she was very skeptical. Suffering from Retinitis Pigmentosa and legally blind, she really didn’t believe that any program could help her. But after a couple of visits to the Lighthouse, she felt less afraid and started to gain back some of her independence. Now she is a graduate of the Vital Living Program.

After Ana completed the program, she knew that she would always be connected to the Lighthouse in some way. Because she found it hard to believe that all of the great services that she received were free, Ana and her family decided that they had to be financial supporters of LHOB. They wanted to make sure that the wonderful work the Lighthouse does continues for others in the future.

The Fernandez family has been generous supporters of the Babies and Kids Program and the Share the Vision Campaign. Because Ana knows personally how much the Lighthouse of Broward does for our blind neighbors, she encourages others to get involved and also support the Lighthouse.

Each of these veterans has a special story... (continued from page 1)

Helen Wooten – Ahead of her time

In 1945, six young friends, all recent graduates of nursing school, decided to join the army, believing they would be stationed near their homes in New Jersey. Instead, Helen Wooten’s service took her from Tacoma, Washington to the Philippines, and on to Japan.

By 1947, she was living in Germany, working as a civilian nurse in the Air Force before returning to active duty. During the Korean War, she was sent to Texas and then Alabama for Flight Nurse Training, but was sidetracked by an assignment to a hospital near Tokyo. In 1952, she began a year of service in Korea where she was promoted to Captain.

Then Helen returned to Alabama, met the man who became her husband and achieved her goal...being assigned to Air Evac. “I loved it.” I was before my time. I had a long military career and then had a son and two daughters when I was between 35 and 40.

Today, Helen is 90-years-old, has 8 grandchildren and a great granddaughter is due April 16th. Since she became totally blind in 2009, she has had a wonderful caretaker who helps with the household and cooking and guides her for walks in the neighborhood with her rescue dog, Gypsy.

But Helen is not the type of woman who is going to let someone do everything for her. So her daughters brought her to the Lighthouse where she “learned proper eating skills, how to thread a needle, do the dishes and pour hot liquids. It really helped me.” Helen is also very involved in the Lighthouse Book Club and enjoys outings with the Lighthouse Alumni Association.

In her matter-of-fact, positive way, Helen sums up the changes she faces now, saying

“It’s a matter of attitude. One has to adjust.” And “the Lighthouse has been wonderful. I learned so much.”

Helen Wooten arriving for the Book Club at the Lighthouse continued on page 4
Each of these veterans has a special story... (continued from page 3)

Ray O’Connor says “I’ve been on my own since I was 15.” This is when he quit school and took a job as a longshoreman. It was also when the United States was entering World War II. At 17, his mother agreed to sign enlistment papers for him and he joined the Navy where he was in the Navy SeaBees and on a destroyer. He served in Okinawa and then in China where he helped free American POWs and took them to hospital ships. Ray was awarded the Battle Star and Navy Commendation for his courage.

After the war, he got married and had various occupations. He joined the NYC Fire Department and once again earned medals for bravery. Then he owned a grocery store, his first venture as a business man, and later bought a motel property in Pompano Beach that included a house and pool for the family. Ray’s can-do spirit made each of his ventures a success.

When Ray’s eyes started to go bad, this same can-do spirit sent him to the Lighthouse of Broward. He heard about it “by word of mouth” and signed up “for cooking, cane travel, the whole 9 yards.” He attends the Lighthouse Book Club and hangs out with some of the other vets. He worked with his instructors to get an audible crossing signal near his home and uses it to cross A1A to get to the pier.

Ray says that it was hard to admit he needed the Lighthouse. “I didn’t need that stuff, but then I was always courageous and curious. I found out that I gained self-confidence I didn’t even know that I needed, and I got help and helped others. That’s the way it works around here.”

Richard Carté – Man of Steel

Richard is a veteran of many of the major US Navy actions of the last half of the 20th century. It had its peaceful moments, such as serving with the security entourage for President Eisenhower’s Goodwill Tour. But Richard’s navy career also included active service in the Cuban Missile Crisis blockade, Turkey, Viet Nam, Suez, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and a year in the Aleutian Islands. While working to repair airfields, his home was the USS Hermitage LSD 34, a landing ship dock that traveled through the Indian, Mediterranean, Caribbean, Atlantic and Pacific oceans. When he did underwater demolition work during the Viet Nam war, he swam home as a scuba diver, to a submarine.

Richard worked hard for the Navy and then went into structural steel work in New York City. His post-Navy career led to a job as Hanging and Raising Foreman, climbing steel to build the south tower of the World Trade Center for one and a half years.

Eventually all Richard’s heavy work caught up with him. He has survived four strokes, the amputation of part of his left foot and replacement of all his major joints. He has 2” titanium screws in his vertebrae from the base of his skull to his pelvis. On June 12, 2012, one of the strokes blinded him. He was totally blind for two years and in physical rehabilitation as well. Then “about 5 months ago, I woke up and asked my wife ‘who came in to paint the room?’ It looked so bright.” The doctors confirmed a very narrow field of vision had returned.

Richard is grateful for the Lighthouse instructors, who came to his home. “I’m housebound.” So he took his white cane lessons in his home area from Steve Matson, “thank God for him, he’s a real asset.” Pat Schneider gets high accolades for teaching Richard safe cooking skills and how to use talking books, a talking watch, alarm clock, and writing guides.

Ray O’Connor – A can do spirit

Ray O’Connor (top left), Ellen Meyers, Book Club Leader, with others from the Book Club

Richard Carté

Richard Carté

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