

THE VISIONARY



LIGHTHOUSE
OF BROWARD

Michael Arbitman Gets it Done

Michael Arbitman, founder of ImUneek, achieves his goals with confidence and enthusiasm. At 38, he is a website developer, independent business owner, proud husband and father of two girls. These accomplishments were achieved at breakneck speed, with Michael's characteristic approach to goals—get them done, now!

His career in the world of high technology began when he was still 18, working for various companies and heading for his dream job, Chief Technology Officer. With a Ph.D. in Computer Science in hand, he did accomplish that goal. Then in 2007, he contracted severe uveitis. He had diabetes since early childhood, making

his eyes vulnerable to infection, and his retinas detached. Surgery was scheduled just before his first wedding anniversary. His right eye could not be saved. His left eye was stabilized so that he sees shapes and shadows under the most favorable lighting conditions.

He dove into training with Lighthouse Orientation and Mobility Specialist, Mike Kloosterman: safe travel skills with a white cane, basic daily living skills around the home and for personal grooming, and an introduction to all the “gizmos and gadgets” that make many routine tasks a little easier. Then the big question: how to get back to the computer. Mike told him about JAWS, the screen reader software that voices aloud

instructions on YouTube. He figured out the rest of what he needed to do by himself. First goal—burn CDs and DVDs. When he was told that this is not possible using JAWS, he made up his own work-around and then told other blind friends. Michael's own grit and determination, and skills gained through donor-supported programs at Lighthouse of Broward, enabled him to turn his life around.

But he faced a brick wall when it came to returning to his corporate career. “I had to redirect my life,” he said. “My mind was the same, but it was impossible to find a job. I had to start my own business. I had no choice.” The first glimmer of the shape of that new business came when his wife Melissa became pregnant. Michael immediately tackled a new goal: learn blind parenting skills. When he couldn't find any resources that met his demands for immediacy, he networked with 16 other blind parents, and suddenly the idea for a new business was born, about the same time his first little girl came home. ImUneek (www.Imuneek.com), his business, is a resource for thousands of people living with disabilities who use the site for networking and finding resources.



Michael Arbitman discusses technology options with Lifetime Learners group at Lighthouse.

everything on the computer monitor, and that the Lighthouse has classes that take about 6 weeks. “Nope, I want it today,” he said. So, Michael bought the software, loaded it on his computer and found basic

Message from the Executive Director

The Many Faces of Success



Each of the stories in our Spring Newsletter shows the ripple effect of success and pride that extends from the individual accomplishments and growth achieved by Lighthouse clients.

Orlando's friends at the Lighthouse are enriched by the social group they formed together. Orlando regained his confidence at the Lighthouse and then brought his deep passion for creating peace and justice to that group, just as he employed it in the person-to-person style that made him a successful salesman. His son carries on that humanistic approach as an accomplished social worker today.

Michael faced a brick wall when it came to returning to his corporate career. Out of his frustrations, he created a successful business model to support his family and help thousands of people living with disabilities or complex medical conditions who access his ImUneck website for information and support.

When Wafa found out that there is no State funding for programs for elementary and middle school blind children, she was shocked. Her younger siblings, a visually impaired brother and a sighted sister, are benefitting from her confident

trailblazing. Meanwhile, parents of babies served in Broward Lighthouse's Blind Babies Program are helping to educate legislators and urging them to support new funding for summer programs like our David and Jean Colker KIDS Program for ages 6 - 12. The funding will be a boost to Lighthouse of Broward and will start services in the many areas of Florida with no programs.

The Lighthouse of Broward directly served more than 1,700 individuals of all ages in FY 2013-2014. We are on track to exceed that number this year. **We are successful in creating taxpayers, and people who are not on social security disability.**

Just think how many more people are and will be touched by our Lighthouse clients, in ever-widening circles of hope—because of your support!

Elly du Pré, DPA

Executive Director

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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL

Tuesday, April 14

Blinded Veterans Association 10:30am-11:30am in the Boardroom. To RSVP contact Jim McCoy at 954-748-9428.

Chapter monthly meeting Florida Council of the Blind in Room 20, 3:30pm-5:30pm. For more information contact Karen at 954-463-4217 ext. 130.

Friday, April 17

Alumni Meeting 10am-Noon in the Boardroom.

Saturday, April 18

Saturday Interfaith Group (10:30am -2:30 pm) Topic: "Leaving This Planet with Dignity." Please RSVP by calling Dolores McDiarmid at 954-684-6708.

Friday, April 24

Book Club 10:00am-12:00pm.

Thursday, April 30

Annual Volunteer Luncheon at Noon in the Dining Room. (Invite only)

MAY

Friday, May 1

Trivia 10am-12pm, Arts & Crafts Club 12:30pm-2pm.

Friday, May 8

Lifetime Learners 10am-Noon, Topic: "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About SunMaid Raisins". Please RSVP by calling Dolores at 954-684-6708

Tuesday, May 12

Blinded Veterans Association 10:30am-11:30am in the Boardroom. To RSVP contact Jim McCoy at 954-748-9428.

Chapter monthly meeting Florida Council of the Blind in Room 20, 3:30pm-5:30pm. For more information contact Karen at 954-463-4217 ext. 130.

Saturday, May 16

Saturday Interfaith Group, 10:30am-2:30pm Topic "Why is Volunteering Important." Please RSVP by calling Dolores McDiarmid at 954-684-6708.

Monday, May 25

Memorial Day LHOB Closed.

Friday, May 29

Book Club 10am to Noon in the Boardroom.



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@BrowardVision

Lighthouse Client Reaches and Exceeds Employment Goals

“Every day still, I think, ‘I learned this at the Lighthouse.’”

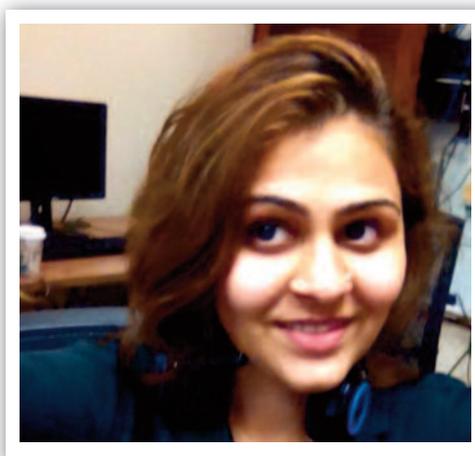
Wafa Rizvi is remembering her years as a middle school student in the summer after-school programs at the Lighthouse. Now successfully completing her first year as a Help Desk specialist for an IT firm, she remembers the skills learned at the Lighthouse were what got her through college and independent living away from home.

Particularly important to her was learning when to disclose her visual impairment during a job interview. “That was huge,” she said. “It totally changes the interview.” She credits her Lighthouse experience for skills in resume writing, networking to get a job, safe travel, confidence, socializing, and “the cooking classes with Pat Schneider that were so helpful when I lived on my own in Tallahassee.” Wafa was offered a job in her chosen field in Washington,

D.C., even before she graduated from Florida State with her B.A. in anthropology and psychology. She plans to eventually pursue a Master's degree in cultural anthropology.

Wafa's younger brother Mahdi is following in her footsteps and has attended Lighthouse camp activities since age 6. He gained the confidence to play soccer with sighted kids in Cooper City and is an Air Cadet Patrol. Wafa says, “I would play the ‘blind card’ to get out of stuff because I was shy” but Mahdi does not, and she is so proud of her brother for his successes. Mahdi received a letter from President Obama congratulating him on his high scores on the FCAT.

The Lighthouse helped Wafa's parents advocate for her to have necessary magnification equipment for her FCAT tests; Broward Schools didn't come through until she was in high



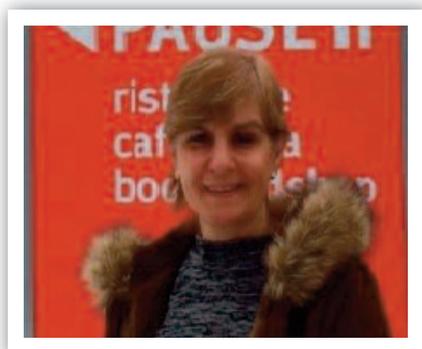
Wafa Rizvi, at work.

school. She barely passed the FCAT until finally excelling when the correct equipment was at last provided. Mahdi benefitted from the advocacy skills her parents learned and got what he needed much earlier.

Today, thanks to donor support of our programs at Lighthouse of Broward, Wafa is an independent young woman, easily traveling by Tri-Rail to visit friends—she told us: “They got lost, but I didn't. The Lighthouse taught me how the system works. Maybe sighted kids should go to the Lighthouse!”

Rosalba Segovia—Teaching the Art of Philanthropy

Rosalba Segovia has been working in the field of Early Childhood Education for 16 years and also is a professor at Nova Southeastern University. So her interest was piqued when Lighthouse Board President and personal friend Shane Sweet started telling her about the Lighthouse's services to babies and children.



Rosalba Segovia, committed to philanthropy.

Currently the owner of a preschool/childcare program called Fantasy Station Academy, Rosalba has many years of dedication to raising funds for various philanthropies including Saint Jude, Leukemia Society, and Make a Wish Foundation. She readily agreed to help Lighthouse of Broward. “The Lighthouse mission attracted me immediately.”

She organized an art show to feature the works of the academy's preschool students and dedicated the proceeds to the Lighthouse. The popular art show has now partnered with the Lighthouse for three years.

Artworks are very important to Fantasy Station Academy's educational

program, known as the Reggio Emilia Approach to Learning, because it focuses on sensory experiences, multiple avenues of expression of thoughts and emotions, and teaching healthy relationships with other people. The connection to the Lighthouse's approach to teaching blind and visually impaired children was direct and natural.

“We also are teaching the children that part of the values of living in a community is to help others. We want them to understand other people's feelings and we want them to learn to be a generous person.”

Thank you, Rosalba! And we welcome you as a new Lighthouse board member!

Orlando McLean: Living by His Principles

Orlando McLean writes poetry: "That's how I try to maintain my balance." His conversation is laced with references to human rights, peace, ancient Jewish wisdom and new-age philosophy, as well as loving stories of family, friends and travels.

Now 74, Orlando started having severe vision loss about five years ago. Glaucoma and diabetes are a bad combination, and eventually he became totally blind. He set himself the goal of learning safe kitchen skills, using a white cane to travel safely, keyboarding and using Talking Books, and sharing experiences, successes and challenges with fellow students at the Tuesday Social Group at Lighthouse of Broward. The group became close and Orlando maintains the warm relationships with the group they founded together, which includes spiritual discussions and Orlando's favorite focus on peace and social justice. He also comes to the Lighthouse on Thursdays for the

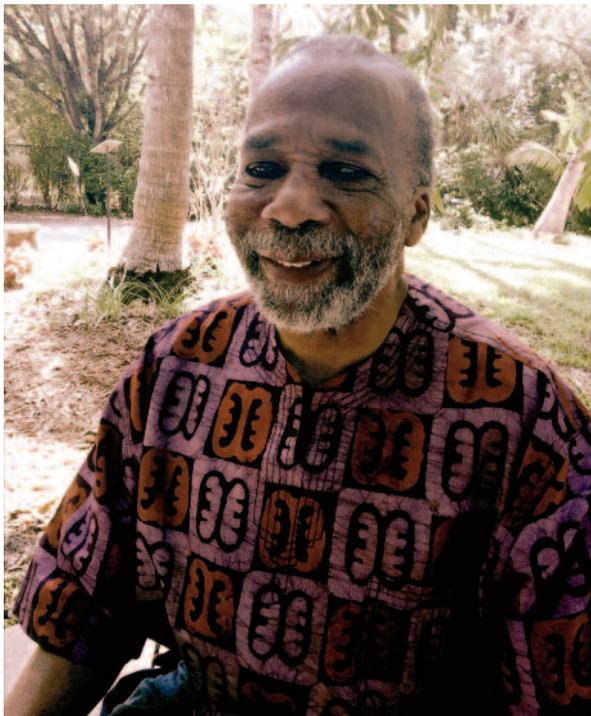
"BFF" group. "I'm trying each day to live a full life—trying to make my own situation work for me."

"Giving is so important—we are not diminished when we give, but rather we gain," Orlando says. "I am not alone, there are other people standing on the same line, like running a marathon." Orlando knows about running, having been a regular at 10K races. He continues to exercise and is getting back into yoga at the Lighthouse twice a month on Saturdays. "I've always had a feeling that there is a reality even if you can't see it. It's like a breath. I've continued to play with that concept—the concept of spirit." He reflects that he has not seen his wife's face in many years, yet he can listen to her voice and "pick up her vibes."

Orlando's son is helping him with some of the technical aspects of getting his thoughts in order, while he waits for some much-anticipated

equipment that will scan and read aloud what he has written. He also enjoys listening to TV and National Public Radio—"that's my go-to station"—and he reads talking books, especially "my mentor—Deepak Chopra, a man of faith and science."

Orlando asked that his picture for this article reflect his focus on being open, growing, embracing life and being thankful for family and friends, and that the picture also show his hopeful, positive, forward-thinking approach to accepting his new situation as a totally blind person.



Orlando McLean, enjoying the Lighthouse Sensory Garden.

Lighthouse

by LHOB Client
Orlando McLean

Love created dark. Love created light.

Imagine beauty in the dark. See beauty in the light.

Great soothing music in the dark.

Head, heart and hands dancing in the light.

Together the party goes on and on

House of light. House of love.

Open to dark open to light.

Under the shadow under the sun.

Serving light and serving love.

Enter now and be as one.