



Bringing the Future into Focus

Jacob Morgan has a passion for photography. While it is an unusual path for someone with vision loss, the 17 year old is used to looking through lenses to see the world clearly.

His many magnification devices and other accessible technology are a source of unending curiosity for his friends and classmates. Each tool serves a specific purpose. "I have a Compact Touch HD video magnifier for reading. I use my iPad for my school work and taking notes, and a monocular and my Trekker Breeze GPS for going on walks," Jacob said.

Recently, when he attended the Community Services for Sight's 3-week Summer Academy, he was



Jacob uses a magnification device to read the newspaper.

introduced to a "low tech" tool—the white cane. Using it will make his journey away from home to college and beyond much easier. It will also make it less of a worry for his mother, Susan. She's hopeful it will make him more visible to distracted drivers and cyclists.

"My time at the Academy was amazing!" Jacob said. "It was great to learn skills that helped me become more independent with daily living." In addition to adaptive technology, he also got a taste of what it would be like to live on his own, on a college campus.

Susan and her husband Bryan encourage their children to be independent. "Jacob was already doing his laundry, but when he came home from camp, we took that extra step and marked our appliances, so it would be easier for him to read the dials," Susan said.

The Other End of the Camera Lens

Meanwhile, on the other side of the camera lens, Jacob's little sister, Lily (5) lets her "inner princess" shine as she dons her mom's creative fashions and accessories. She is the top model and namesake for Susan's online business, Lily Beans Bowtique. "She attracts a lot of attention everywhere



Susan and Lily enjoying the Animal Kingdom at Walt Disney World.

we go," Susan said. "People are always commenting on her angelic hair."

The "little angel" is a force to be reckoned with, however, embracing life at every turn. She enjoyed CSS's Kid Camp, dedicated to helping blind children become more independent. She knows how to advocate for herself and doesn't hesitate to say, "Hey, I can't see that! I have a vision problem, you know!" Smart and precocious, she doesn't let her low vision slow her down. Her vision teacher says, "I've never dealt with someone like her!"

Jacob and Lily were born with oculocutaneous albinism, a rare hereditary condition that usually affects the hair, skin, and eyes. Both

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Message from the President



As I think about my tenure as CEO at Pennsylvania Association for the Blind, I am thankful for the many people I've had the opportunity to meet and work with since coming to work at this terrific organization. I've met with legislators, civic organizations, and individuals that stand with us by providing financial support. I must share with you that they are all impressed with the great work our member organizations do across the Commonwealth. I am privileged to work with a dedicated and skilled statewide group staff members in carrying out our mission to help Pennsylvanians prevent, prepare for, and manage vision loss.

We're very excited about 2015. We are currently conducting a statewide needs assessment to determine how we must grow and change over the next 5 years to be able to meet the

needs of Pennsylvania citizens, particularly those who are elderly, which constitute the largest percentage of people with vision loss.

In addition to providing services to people with vision impairment, PAB has a robust Prevention of Blindness Program. Last year, PAB provided over 73,000 free vision screenings for preschool children and adults, as well as 2,000 eye safety education programs. You will see some of our activities reflected in this newsletter.

So, if you think Pennsylvania Association for the Blind serves only people who are blind, we invite you to take a closer look!

Sincerely,

Elaine Welch
President/CEO

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parents must be carriers of the recessive gene for it to show up, as it did in two of the Morgan's three children. The two are sensitive to sunlight and glare, and must protect their skin and eyes with sunscreen, clothing, and sunglasses.

Community Services for Sight is one of the 26 Member Agencies in PAB's network. CSS educates to prevent blindness, and serves people who are blind, visually impaired, or disabled throughout Southern Luzerne, Carbon, and Schuylkill Counties.



MARCH is Workplace Eye Wellness Month

Think of workplace eye safety, and what images come to mind? Lab workers wearing goggles? Construction workers wearing safety glasses? Those are both good examples. Those specialized glasses are protecting the eyes from dust, debris, projectiles, and chemicals. But, those aren't the only things that could damage eyes. Office workers experience ongoing strain to their eyes, and the increasing use of electronic devices—both in and out of the office—adds to that strain. Those who already wear glasses would benefit from both an anti-reflective (anti-glare) coating as well as a tint to block the blue light of the electronics. Everyone would benefit from following these simple guidelines:

- Keep the screen 20 to 26 inches from your eyes.
- Adjust the text size to a comfortable level.
- Adjust lighting to prevent glare on the screen.
- And, follow the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, focus on something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

APRIL is Women's Eye Health Month

In America, more than 3 million people are blind or visually impaired. Approximately 68% of those are women. Studies have shown that women are more likely than men to develop cataracts, glaucoma, and age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Hormonal changes during pregnancy can lead to dry eye syndrome and changes in refraction; and the added hormones when using birth control or hormone replacement therapy could result in blood clots which also affect vision. Diabetes, which can lead to diabetic retinopathy and other eye diseases, affects one out of every 10 American women. Because of the relationship between physical health and eye disease, it is important that women receive regular exams from both physicians and optometrists.

They're on the Same Page

Tom and Sandy Marsiglia are on the same page when it comes to the importance of braille literacy to people who are blind or low vision. And that's good, because Sandy is about to take her final exam to become certified as a braille proofreader. She's on contract to work for the Pennsylvania Association for the Blind's Braille Embossing Service.

"Actually, Tom fully supports everything I do —my new job, my getting certified in braille, getting my master's degree in business administration, getting a guide dog, whatever. He's pretty much: Anything Sandy wants is okay." Some might say a happy wife is the secret to every great marriage, but in this case, it is a shared philosophy of the importance of independence and interdependence.

The two first met when Tom was assigned to be Sandy's Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. She'd just completed getting her associate's degree and was trying to get a job. She got a job, and they lost touch for a while. And then, when she needed a ride and some employment advice, she decided to give him a call. "From that point on," she said, "we started talking again, and began dating."

"On one of our first dates, he was taking me sighted guide, but somehow I ended up walking right into a pole! I was all dressed up in a skirt and heels, but I fell right on my butt! I was laughing so hard. He picked up my bag and kissed the bump on my forehead —that was the beginning of a relationship that has lasted almost 20 years."

They married, and Sandy became the stepmom to Tom's three children (5, 7, 10), who are now grown with

families of their own. Their four grandchildren are 8, 3, 2 and 1. Tom later went into social work and is now retired. Sandy's guide dog Gustine is enjoying retirement also, as a pet.

Although he'd worked as a rehab counselor for a while, actually being with someone with low vision gave Tom a deeper understanding about blindness. "It's one thing to learn about it, but another to see a person live it," Sandy said. "He saw me being independent. I taught him York County; I'd been using the bus system and knew my way around. I showed him how we fold our money, how we label food, and how we use a mobility cane."

Following the Dots

Sandy believes that braille code is easier to learn when you grow up with it, and she tells parents to: Get that braille book into your child's hands as soon as possible! She reasons, "They're learning their ABC's anyway —why not learn them in braille at the same time? There's no guarantee their vision will remain the same throughout their lives."

She was born with retinopathy of prematurity. Because she had some vision, she was told she didn't need to learn braille. "I always felt I was having to catch up with my peers," she said. "I promised myself that after I got my master's degree, I would learn braille. I was tired of being left behind." The final straw came when she attended a board meeting of the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind and was unable to access the handouts in large print or braille.

Now, she's on a mission, to learn it for herself and teach it to others.



Sandy and Tom—supporting each other for almost twenty years.

"Braille classes were being taught right upstairs from where I work," she said. "After my class, I'd go home and get a book that was on a fourth or fifth grade reading level — something like Little House on the Prairie or Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys —and read a chapter a night. At first, I was reading only about seven pages an hour, but soon I built up speed. It's a good way to learn the contractions. It's one thing to read braille, though, and another to learn to write it correctly, with proper formatting." Learning braille, like learning to play piano, takes discipline.

Sandy embraces accessible technology, such as PAC Mate and BrailleNote. In fact, she works part-time teaching clients who are blind how to use the iPhone, iPad, and iPod with JAWS screen reading software and with braille displays. She's excited about the new apps such as BrailleTouch and MBraille that allow users to type right on the screen.

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"Braille code itself is changing to bring the United States more in line with what other countries are using," she explained. "By 2016, we will all be using Unified English Braille (UEB), and some organizations are already using it. Currently, some of our braille contractions can have more than one meaning, so they are being eliminated for clarity."

Sandy prefers good, old-fashioned braille notes on index cards when she's making presentations. "I don't have to worry about technology failing or batteries dying," she said. "I don't staple the cards—takes up too much room—

but I make sure to number them in case I drop them."

Recently, she was invited to join her boss and a coworker who were interviewing an applicant. "By using braille, I was able to quickly refer to my notes. And," she added, "nobody else could read them!"

Independence and Interdependence

"Tom and I both believe there's a difference between being independent and being dogmatic. I've seen some people refuse to ask for help, endangering their own safety. And I've seen others who

aren't independent enough," Sandy said.

"Tom knows that I'm okay, and that if I need help, I'm going to ask him for it. Until then, he stays out of my way," she said. "I like to say: I depend on Tom, but I'm not co-dependent on him. I want people to see me for who I am, not for my blindness. I want to show them what I can do, through my actions."

PAB's Braille Embossing Service translates printed text, books, menus, bills, and other information into braille for businesses and individuals. Call (717) 766-2020 for a free price quote.

WHY I GIVE

"Why do I give to the Pennsylvania Association for the Blind? Because I want to make someone happy," said Khoi Luong.

He first found out about PAB when he agreed to volunteer at a Lions Club fundraiser for the organization. Lions International is noted for its support of organizations offering services to people who are blind or visually impaired. It felt good to take part in something that was helping others.

Khoi's family moved from Viet Nam to the U.S. in 2012, when he was in his last year of high school, first to Los Angeles, California, and then to Reading, Pennsylvania. He is now 21 and attending college at Albright, majoring in computer science and digital media.

"When I first came to Reading to finish high school," he said, "I had no friends. I was a brand new

student. English is my second language, and sometimes people have a hard time understanding my accent. But I met an American who helped me a lot. He explained English grammar, and he helped me adapt to the high school environment. It made me realize how valuable it is to help other people, and now I want to do it as best I can."

While a student, Khoi has also worked in restaurants and now has a job in the campus library. "I save a little from each paycheck to make my donations," he said. He donates online to save paper. He has also donated to support disaster relief efforts.

For Khoi, developing a regular practice of giving is something he hopes to do for the rest of his life. "I do what I can," he said. "I did something good, and I want to do



more. I want to help people who are blind. It makes me happy to know I made someone smile!"

PAB makes giving easy. Go to www.pabind.org/donate to make an individual or recurring donation using your credit card or PayPal account. You can also make a meaningful gift in memory of a friend or loved one. If you prefer to send a check by mail, send it to the PAB, 555 Gettysburg Pike, Suite A300 - Mechanicsburg, PA 17055