

Blind Center of Nevada

April 2007 Chatterbox

Congratulations to the National Statler Center's Inaugural Nevada Extension Class!!!!

The National Statler Center for Careers in Hospitality has spent 10 weeks in Las Vegas preparing 10 bright people with visual impairments and/or physical disabilities for exciting careers in the hotel, travel, and customer service business. Since 1999, more than 200 people have graduated the program; more than 85% of our graduates are placed.

The Statler Center has teamed up with the Blind Center of Nevada, and the Nevada Department of Employment, Training & Rehabilitation to educate and train these stellar students from the Las Vegas area for positions in the hospitality field. We would like to congratulate each student for fearlessly stepping out of their comfort zone and taking a huge step toward a brighter future.

The Blind Center of Nevada is very excited to have been a part of this successful program. We look forward to a long working relationship with both agencies to bring a brighter future to the disabled community of Las Vegas, Nevada.



The Statler Center Inaugural Las Vegas class

Our 23rd class: (standing l-r) Cheryl Lutomski, Andre Ilie, Gabriella Torres, Alan Bredow, Don Bosso, Anthony Gravely, and Bill Mattern. Seated are Teresa Schlotfeldt, Jeremy Holland, Mary Ann Sena-Edelen (Instructor from MGM University), and Matt Voigt

Congratulations to you for a job well done!

Attention Las Vegas, be on the lookout for these outstanding individuals who will be working in our community to bring you superb customer service.

Scientists hope bionic cat eye will aid humans

By David Twiddy

Columbia, MO- Gingersnap, a 4-year-old Abyssinian, rolled lazily on the examining table while Dr. Kristina Narfstrom rubbed the cat's cinnamon-colored head. Then, using a special viewer, Narfstrom peered deep into the cat's eyes to measure her losing battle with a disorder that is slowly killing her retinas, the thin film at the back of the eye that makes sight possible. "By the time she's 5, she'll probably be blind," said Narfstrom, a veterinary ophthalmologist at the University of Missouri, Columbia.

Gingersnap's condition is similar to Retinitis Pigmentosa, an incurable genetic disease in humans that strikes one out of every 3,500 Americans and often causes blindness. Narfstrom, who discovered the feline version of the disease among Abyssinians in her native Sweden, is implanting special silicon chips in partially blind cats in a bid to help replace or possibly repair diseased retinas in humans.

Retinitis Pigmentosa attacks the eyes photoreceptor cells (also called rods and cones) that register light and color. The chips, which provide their own energy, have shown encouraging results in clinical human trials, in some cases improving sight in people with Retinitis Pigmentosa or at least slowing the disease's development. Narfstrom said chips have been implanted in 30 people.

Narfstrom's cats will help researchers fine-tune the chips and train physicians on surgical techniques to implant the devices, because the structure of a cat's eye is similar to that of a human's.

Continued on next page

The 2-millimeter-wide chips, developed by Optobionics Corp. of Naperville, Ill., are surgically implanted in the back of the eye. Each chip's surface is covered with 5,000 micro photodiodes that react to light, sending electric signals along the eye's optic nerve to the brain. "We're placing it right where the photoreceptors are and if they're

lacking, this is supposed to replace what they're doing," she said. "At this point, it's impulses of light they're seeing (as opposed to images), but the aim of the research is to get more information out of the chip." Besides helping slow the advance of the disease, studies suggest that the electric currents generated by the chips may be regenerating damaged photoreceptors surrounding the implants.

Narfstrom said she should know in about two years, whether the implants are actually encouraging retinal cells in her cats to grow. The optobionics chip is just one of many research paths now swarming with scientists looking for ways to protect and restore sight. Besides genetic therapy, which is seen as a good tool to fight hereditary disorders, researchers are also looking to use stem cells to rebuild damaged retinal cells. Others are looking for substances that could trick healthy retinal cells surrounding the photoreceptors to take over for their diseased counterparts. Then there are the many attempts, like those of Optobionics, of creating artificial sight. Some efforts include miniature video cameras that pipe images straight to the brain, devices that send signals to a network of miniature electrodes attached to the retina or chips that eventually could graft themselves to retinal cells, creating a cyborg like system for producing images.

A French company is conducting trials for an implant that would release proteins in the eyeball to offset the damage done to retinal cells, perhaps indefinitely. Tim Schoen, director of research development for the foundation Fighting Blindness, a Baltimore area group that funds researchers, said technology to provide prosthetic sight is especially encouraging.

"This offers great hope to individuals who have completely lost all vision," said Schoen, whose group is not involved in the Optobionics chip. "We can treat these patients with gene therapy, but once the photoreceptors die, we have to replace them with stem cells or one of these artificial methods."

Machelle Pardue, a researcher at Emory University and the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Atlanta, who is working with Narfstrom on the Optobionics chip, said she's glad she's not the only one doing such research. "I think it's helpful because we all have slightly different ideas and expertise," Pardue said. "In some respect, we are competing to find a product that will work, but that's advantageous to the patients because it provides an incentive to move forward."



Dr. Kristina Narfstrom, who discovered the feline version of Retinitis Pigmentosa among Abyssinians, is preparing to look into 4-year-old Gingersnap's eyes.

APRIL 2007 WEEKLY SCHEDULE

COMPUTER LAB OPEN MON-FRI 9AM – 5PM
COMPUTER MENTORING MON-WED 9:30AM-10:30AM
MONDAY SHOPPING TRIP 9:30-10:30AM
BOWLING MONDAY 11:15AM
BAKERY GOODS EVERY MONDAY
TUESDAY CHOIR PRACTICE 10:00AM
TUESDAY CHAT & GAMES SOCIAL HOURS 9:30-11:30AM
TUESDAY SHOPPING TRIP 9:30AM-10:30AM
GUEST SPEAKER EVERY TUESDAY 12:15PM
TUESDAY HARP & FLUTE LESSONS 12:00PM
SHOPPING TRIP WEDNESDAYS 9:30-10:30AM
VISITING PHARMACIST WEDNESDAY 10:30AM
CLARINET LESSONS EVERY OTHER WEDNESDAY
TAI CHI WEDNESDAY 12:30-1:30PM
DANCE LESSONS WEDNESDAY 3:30-4:30PM
WEDNESDAY \$1 TACO DAY! ORDER BY TUESDAY
MAIL READING ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE
MON-FRIDAY BYAPPOINTMENT
WALMART SHOPPING TRIP THURSDAYS 9:30AM
THURSDAY “DRAMA IN THE HOUSE” 12:00PM
THURSDAY SUPPORT GROUP 1:00-2:00PM
**THURSDAY GUITAR / MANDOLIN/ AUTOHARP/ BANJO/
PIANO LESSONS 2:30-3:30PM**
**FRIDAY PIANO / VIOLIN / ACCORDIAN / GUITAR LESSONS
12:00-5:00PM**
****SIGHTED ASSISTANCE PROVIDED FOR ALL
EVENTS AND OUTINGS**

April 2007

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5 Spring Fling 1030am	6	7
8 Easter Sunday	9	10	11	12	13	14 Lake Mead Cruise
15	16	17 Foot Doctor 11:30am	18	19	30	21
22	23	24	25	26 Sensory Safari 1:00pm	27	28
29	30					

Spring Fever at the Blind Center!

**Spring Fling Party
Thursday, April 5th 10:30am-1:30pm
Games and fun compliments of
The Marek Family!**

**Lake Mead Cruise
Saturday, April 14th
If you'd like to participate, you must sign up!
No exceptions. We will have lunch on board
and this special day of fun is provided by
Forever Earth.**

**Sensory Safari
Thursday, April 26th
Las Vegas Natural History Museum
Sign-up required!**



Sponsor-A-Meal 2007

Yes, I would like to Sponsor-A-Meal for a blind or visually impaired individual.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> One month - \$40 | <input type="checkbox"/> Six months - \$240 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly - \$120 | <input type="checkbox"/> Yearly - \$480 |

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

I have enclosed a check in the amount of \$_____ payable to Blind Center of Nevada, 1001 N. Bruce Street, Las Vegas, NV 89101.

Bill my Credit Card in the amount of \$_____

Card type _____ Card number _____

Expiration date _____ Security Code _____

Signature: _____

Detach and mail to the Blind Center

For more information on this and other programs offered to blind and visually impaired members of our community please call Paula Debus at 642-6000 or log on to our website at www.blindcenter.org.



Nevada's Bureau of Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired:

Bureau of Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired (BSBVI) provides a variety of services to eligible individuals to help them prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain gainful employment consistent with the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and informed choice.

Who is eligible?

Any person in Nevada who has a visual problem that is not correctable by glasses may be eligible for BSBVI services.

Most people BSBVI serves are visually impaired but not totally blind. If the bureau is unable to offer assistance, the client is referred to the most appropriate agency.

How to obtain services:

For more information about BSBVI programs and services call 486-5320 and a representative will advise you of the most convenient means to apply for services.

What is the cost?

Although most BSBVI services are free of charge, clients do participate in the cost of certain services if their personal financial circumstances allow such involvement.

Bureau of Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired
(BSBVI) Continued:

Low Vision Exams and Aids:

Low Vision Exams and Aids may include visual examinations and a variety of adaptive aids for employment and every day needs. These aids allow individuals with low vision to maximize their remaining vision.

Adaptive Training:

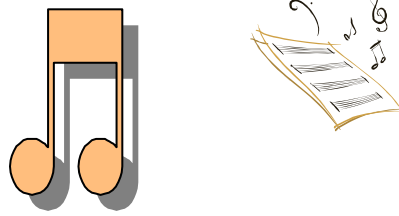
Adaptive Training provides individualized training in home management, Braille, low vision aids, communication, and vocational skills delivered by professionally trained instructors. Most importantly, participants grow in self-confidence and become more independent.

Independent Living/Daily Living:

Independent Living/Daily Living offers individualized training in home management, daily living skills, mobility, and communication skills enhancements and low vision aids as appropriate.

**For information on these and other services
provided by Bureau of Services to the Blind and
Visually Impaired (BSBVI) call 702-486-5333**

Blind Center of Nevada Music Program



Tuesdays

Choir Class from 10:00am to 11:00am

Harp Lessons from 12:00pm to 1:00pm

Flute Lessons from 12:00pm to 1:00pm

Wednesdays

Clarinet Lessons 10:00am to 11:00am every other week

Thursdays

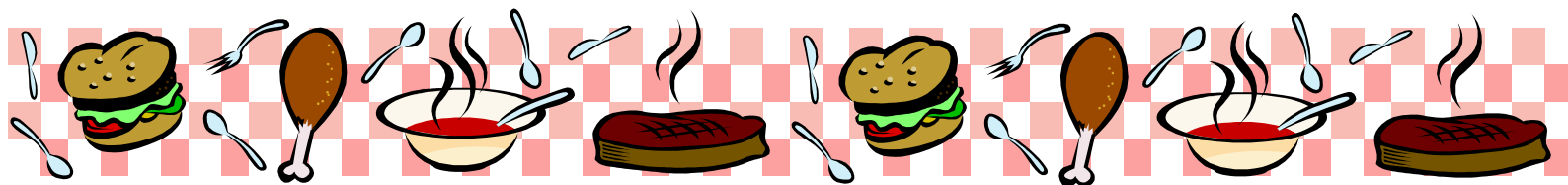
Guitar Lessons 2:30pm to 3:30pm

Fridays

Piano/Violin/Accordion/Guitar 12:00pm to 5:00pm

The Blind Center of Nevada has a very dedicated team of professional Music & Arts Teachers who are eager to grow our music department. For more information or to sign up please contact 642-6000.

If you are a music teacher and are interested in sharing your skills and joining our team please contact Paula Debus at 642-6000 or paulad@blindcenter.org.



Announcing the Blind Center's 7th Annual Good Old Fashioned BBQ and Auction Fundraiser

When: Thursday, May 10, 2007

Time: 5:00 to 8:00pm

We Invite You to Tour
Our Newly Remodeled
Building

Place: 1001 N. Bruce Street, Las Vegas, NV 89101

Your \$75 donation per person will help support the beneficial programs and services that are provided at no charge to blind and visually impaired individuals who reside in Southern Nevada.

Your generous donation will entitle you to our outstanding BBQ dinner with all the fixings, a tour of our newly remodeled Blind Center, entertainment and great live and silent auction items.

For more information and to order your tickets please call 642-6000.

Thank you for your support!

Make the Most of Your Life-Start Today!

Are you or someone you know experiencing vision loss and in need of assistance with magnifying devices, assistive technology, advocacy, referral, mail reading, daily living skills, support group meetings or other areas of assistance?

The Blind Center of Nevada offers this type of assistance as well as a host of other important programs and services to the blind and visually impaired community. Do not let another day pass by without getting the assistance you need and deserve. Call 642-6000 for more information.

BLIND CENTER OF NEVADA
1001 N. BRUCE STREET
LAS VEGAS, NV 89101



FREE MATTER
FOR THE BLIND

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