

# FLORIDA OUTREACH CENTER FOR THE BLIND, INC.



## INFORMATION BOOKLET

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## **1. MISSION, DESCRIPTION and HISTORY**

**1.1.1.** The mission of the Florida Outreach Center for the Blind (FOCB) is to develop and administer programs for persons who are blind and visually impaired that will integrate them into the social, economic and spiritual lives of their communities.

The Florida Outreach Center for the Blind is a not-for-profit training facility formed for the express purpose of providing services to people who are blind or visually impaired. It was founded in 2003 by Carolyn Lapp who lost her sight at age fourteen in an automobile accident. She realized that thousands of visually- impaired persons had virtually no services. Ms. Lapp established the FOCB with a mission to address the needs of the estimated 48,000 visually impaired residents of Palm Beach County. According to Carolyn, "I believe that I'm blind for a reason and that is so I can help others who are experiencing the challenges of vision loss." Mrs. Lapp's idea was a simple one: give blind and visually impaired people the tools and training they need and they will develop a good attitude about their blindness and reach their personal, academic and vocational goals. *It was Ms. Lapp's belief that students could benefit from the perspective and insight of a positive blind role model and would respond well and more rapidly to someone who knows first-hand what they are experiencing and has successfully met the challenge. Therefore, FOCB is unique among local organizations serving blind and low-vision persons in that the CEO, most of the staff and at least half of the board members are blind.*

**1.1.2.** In the mid-2000's, when the Lighthouse for the Blind of the Palm Beaches found it difficult to continue services, FOCB filled the void, providing the only non-governmental support for the blind community. More than a decade after its organization, FOCB continues to vigorously pursue its mission of total integration of the blind and visually impaired into society and providing the opportunities in rehabilitation of the blind to expand their personal expectations and reach their full potential.

**1.1.3.** In 2010, FOCB moved into its current facility, a free-standing, community based training Center conveniently located on a major bus route. The Center has continued to expand its programs to meet consumers' needs.

## **2. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT**

**2.1.** FOCB is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt not-for-profit organization. It is set up as a C Corporation with the standard corporate structure. The Center is govern by a five to seven member Board of Directors of which fifty percent are required by our By-Laws to be blind or have an immediate family member who is blind. This arrangement is purposeful, in that it is a reminder of why FOCB exists, what is its mission and who it serves. The Board cannot take FOCB in a direction that does not include serving the blind and visually impaired as its only purpose. The Board elects a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Board members are all volunteers and receive no compensation. The operations are overseen by an Executive Director that serves at the pleasure of the Board.

The Florida Outreach Center for the Blind has met the high standards of performance set by the National Accreditation Council for Blind and Low Vision Services (NAC). It is registered with the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, Registration No. CH17058, to collect charitable donations.

## **3. BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**3.1.** The Board is diversified in its membership, but each member has some link to people who are visually impaired or blind. The following are the current Board members and officers. A profile of each board member can be found in Appendix A.

Frank Seidman, President, Sighted

William "Ozzie" Osborne, Vice President, Visually Impaired

Tom Hennon, Secretary, Sighted

Leo Thompson, Treasurer, Visually Impaired

Dennis Stevenson, Member, Visually Impaired

Edna Strnad, Member, Visually Impaired

Jill Brondolo, Member, Visually Impaired

The Board is assisted by an Advisory Board consisting of fifteen area consumers and professionals that report to the Board of Directors. The purpose of the committee is to provide a resource of volunteers that fully support FOCB's goals and can provide expertise to supplement that of the Board and Staff in such areas as fund raising, accounting, law, business & financial management and blind services.

## **4. STAFF**

**4.1.** FOCB is quite proud of its small but talented and dedicated staff, whether paid or volunteer. They bring skills and an enthusiasm for teaching that has brought favorable results to and recognition by clients and members of the community. All staff members report to the Executive Director.

Carolyn Lapp, Executive Director

Sarah Clark, Certified Vision and Rehabilitation Therapist

Manes Pacius, Bookkeeper & Instructor

Jason Goldfield, Assistive Technology Specialist

Maria Norris, Braille and Independent Living Instructor

## **5. SCOPE OF SERVICES**

**5.1.1.** People with visual impairments have significant needs, whether they were born blind or lost their sight later in life. They need to be able to cope with their blindness while leading lives of contribution and contentment. They need to find work, to support themselves and their families. They need and want to be able to travel, and to communicate easily with others near and far. FOCB recognizes that for every technique used by a sighted person to accomplish a task, alternative methods can be used by a blind person to achieve the same results. It is our goal to teach these alternative techniques in our programs. Through the skills learned at FOCB, visually impaired persons are equipped with the tools necessary for them to live independently, pursue and education or be viable candidates in an increasingly competitive job market.

**5.1.2.** FOCB addresses these needs by providing instruction and support in the areas of independent living skills and vocational rehabilitation services. Some of the programs and services include the following:

Reading and Writing Braille

Daily Living Skills training

Personal, Financial and Home Management Training

Assistive Technology Training

Low Vision, Optical, and Non-Optical Devices Training

Orientation and Mobility training

Job Coaching and Readiness Training

Transition Program for High School students who are visually impaired

Outreach Programs for seniors who are visually impaired

Kids' Club for blind children and their families

Peer/Facilitated Support

Self-Advocacy Training

Information and Referral Services

Recreational and Leisure Time Activities Training

Book Club led by Talking Books Librarian

All services are provided, free of charge to the client, in English, Spanish, French and Creole. The Center has never turned away any blind person who requested help.

**5.1.3.** FOCB does not just teach skills. It uses a holistic approach that addresses the general needs of its clients and families. Incorporated in its training, FOCB:

Counsels visually impaired individuals to understand and accept their blindness.

Provides training in the essential skills for independent living.

Provides positive role models to assist the blind in reaching their full potential.

Locates, informs and helps acquire for the blind individual, services available to them.

Educates clients on civil rights concerning their blindness.

Informs and trains the blind in the use of adaptive technology, aids and appliances.

FOCB reaches out to and supports the families by:

Counseling sighted family members and friends of the blind individual to aid them in understanding blindness.

Serving as liaison between the client and other agencies. (Florida Division of Blind Services, Veterans Administration, Social Security Administration, Office of Equal Opportunity, etc.)

Employing visually impaired instructors.

Working with eye care professionals.

Training and utilizing volunteers.

Increasing awareness about blindness through presentations, web site, social media, mail-outs, literature, and newsletters.

**5.1.4.** The Florida Outreach Center for the Blind offers itinerant and facility-based services. The Center serves an average of one hundred and thirty clients annually.

**5.1.5.** In 2011, the Florida Outreach Center for the Blind initiated a Kids' Club that provides opportunities for blind children and their families to share support and resources. The Club hosts activities such as a Beeping Egg Hunt, annual Holiday Party and a touch-tour of the Barnum and Bailey Circus. In addition, the Center host the only Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning (BELL) Program for low-vision children who are not taught Braille in school because of their residual vision. This life-changing program provides children with low vision with intense exposure to Braille and other forms of non-visual learning through fun activities. By providing the BELL Program, FOCB hopes to reduce the eighty-five per cent illiteracy rate among low-vision children.

**5.1.6.** In the coming years, FOCB would like to increase its services from 130 individuals to 350 individuals, annually. This will require additional staff. This would enable the Center to expand its services to include Martin, St. Lucie, Okeechobee and Indian River counties.

## **6. DEVELOPING REVENUES SOURCES TO MEETING OUR CHALLENGES**

### **6.1 Meeting the Challenges**

**6.1.1.** There are similarities and differences between profit making and not-for-profit organizations and differences between the Florida Outreach Center for the Blind and other charities. This has a significant impact in how we approach the revenue development to meet our challenges.

### **6.1.2. How do we meet our challenges?**

By developing a meaningful relationship between potential donors and grantors and what FOCB stands for and accomplishes. Potential donors must be made to understand that what FOCB does matters to them, their families and their friends; that blindness or severe vision loss is something that, indeed, can happen to anyone and though there may not be a cure it is not a tragedy and does not have to be a handicap. They must be made to “see” that all that has happened is the loss of one of their six senses. The others work just fine and that a person that is blind or visually impaired can do just about anything **if** they can get the right training. And here it is, right in front of them – at FOCB. All they have to do is provide the financial means and we, FOCB, will do the rest. Especially, with regard to people who have Diabetes and are at risk of getting Diabetic Retinopathy, as well as, seniors who are susceptible to losing vision through age related diseases, why would you let this loss end your productive lives when there is much awaiting you?

**6.1.3.** The understanding of the relationship of FOCB versus other charities is important in developing revenue resources to meet our challenges. Regardless, of the type of source pursued, FOCB will strive to make the potential donor “relate.”

## **6.2. Revenue Sources**

**6.2.1.** Among the revenue sources that FOCB pursues are grants, contracts, donations through fundraising events, one time donations and annual memberships. Not all of these sources result in revenues; some involve the donation of assets or services that offset the need for revenue.

**6.2.2.** Public Grants or Contracts and Private Grants – The primary sources for public grants and contracts are the Florida Division of Blind Services and the Able Trust. These grants and contracts are very important because they provide cash to cover administrative and personnel costs, whereas many private sources fund equipment and other assets. In addition, FOCB submits proposals for several private grants every year.

**6.2.3.** Donations through fundraising events – For nine years, FOCB’s primary fundraising event has been Dining in the Dark. It is a fall event, supported by table sponsors at various donation levels and individual ticket sales. It has grown from seventy-five participants to two hundred and fifty participants. It is also a public awareness event, therefore, FOCB strives to keep individual ticket prices affordable. We are also limited in its size because of the safety issues associated with an event held in total darkness.

**6.2.4.** FOCB intends to pursue a spring event that has the potential for larger net revenues than Dining in the Dark. Such an event would target our seasonal residents and take place between February and April.

**6.2.5.** FOCB holds spaghetti dinners at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4360 about four times a year. It also holds regular yard sales and sponsored BBQ's. These events are well attended, and although each may net only a few hundred dollars, they help to increase our exposure and make the community aware of our services.

**6.2.6.** One time donations – FOCB pursues one time donations for merchandise on a regular basis. Through the Executive Director, FOCB receives donations of office and training equipment from state and local agencies. As a result, FOCB rarely has to purchase anything other than disposable supplies. In addition, through our volunteers, FOCB obtains food and related supplies to support children's parties, open houses and other events open to the public.

**6.2.7.** Annual Donations – FOCB solicits annual membership donations through its website and Facebook sites.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS – Profiles**

#### **Frank Seidman**, President, Sighted

Mr. Seidman is a Professional Engineer, licensed to practice in the state of Florida. He earned his B.S. in Electrical Engineering from the University of Miami and completed several post graduate courses in Economics at Florida State University. For the past thirty-five years, Mr. Seidman has been a consultant in the field of public utility rates, management and regulation, and has operated his own firm for the past twenty-five years. Prior to joining FOCB, Mr. Seidman, at the urging of a lifelong friend with Retinitis Pigmentosa, served on the board of Lighthouse of the Big Bend in Tallahassee. For two of those years, he served as President. It was at Lighthouse that Mr. Seidman initiated the Dining in the Dark event. Mr. Seidman is also a member of the West Palm Beach Lions Club and through that association participates in activities that support the blind community, including FOCB.

#### **William “Ozzie” Osborne**, Vice President, Visually Impaired

Mr. Osborne is a retired IBM executive with extensive experience in product development, technology commercialization, and product strategy and go-to-market partnerships. He holds a BS degree in Mathematics from Florida Institute of Technology. He began losing his sight to a rare eye disease about five years ago and has been a student as well as a board member at FOCB.

Mr. Osborne is regarded as one of the pioneers of the personal computing industry, with over 36 years at IBM, heading up areas in PCs, telephony, speech recognition and pervasive solutions and is well known within IBM and the personal computing industry for introducing new products, technologies and simply put, making things happen. He helped create alliances and partnerships to enhance the adoption and fuel the growth of wireless and pervasive solutions. He was also responsible for system strategy, system architecture, software strategy, new business development and key alliances. He was also responsible for the PC Asia Pacific South region as it related to the development of operating systems and manufacturing process systems. Mr. Osborne was responsible for the overall management of IBM's Voice business in voice recognition and telephony products. He was named one of the top ten most influential leaders in the speech market by SpeechTek Magazine in 2001 and 2002. In addition to serving on FOCB's board, he also serves on the FAU College of Science adversary board, the Rosarian Academy board, and is a consultant to Script/RX.

**Tom Hennon**, Secretary, Sighted

Mr. Hennon is the Office Manager for the West Palm Beach office of McGladrey LLP, a national accounting firm specializing in taxes, business and wealth management. He holds a B.S. degree in Electronic Engineering Technology from the DeVry Institute of Technology. Previously Mr. Hennon worked for thirty-two years as a software engineer in the telephony industry.

Mr. Hennon has always been passionate about working for non-profit organizations. Since 1990 he has volunteered his assistance to the Advent Lutheran Church and the Grace Community Church, both in Boca Raton. Mr. Hennon also volunteers his time at Compass, Inc. of Lake Worth and the Gold Coast Ringers. For almost eight years, Mr. Hennon has been instrumental in making FOCB's annual Dining in the Dark event a success. He has also assisted with FOCB's move to the current facility and has made himself available for whatever FOCB asks of him. Mr. Hennon currently is serving as Secretary to the Board of Directors.

**Leo Thompson**, Treasurer, Visually Impaired

Mr. Thompson retired in 2012 from the State of Florida Division of Blind Services Rehabilitation Center in Daytona. Since retiring, he volunteers his time and efforts at the Florida Outreach Center for the Blind where he serves on the Board of Directors and Advisory Board, in addition to raising two of his granddaughters.

Mr. Thompson is a graduate of the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind in St. Augustine. He also attended Daytona Beach State College where he studied wood working and food service. Mr. Thompson served as an instructor at the College of Architecture. While at the Division of Blind Services, he served as an instructor at their training center and then entered into the food service program in 1979. Mr. Thompson operated a cafeteria at the Department of Revenue building. Returning to private industry in 1984, he worked as the Assistant Director of Food Service, then got his own cafeteria at the Clyde Pepper Building located across the street from the Capitol Building in Tallahassee.

**Dennis Stevenson**, Member, Visually Impaired

Mr. Stevenson adds a different area of expertise to the Board – athletics and recreation. He was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and grew up there and in Green Bay. While growing up he started refereeing and umpiring in different sports. He attended professional umpire school in Daytona Beach in 1976 and was retained as a Minor League prospect. He worked as a Class A umpire, was promoted to AA, and then to AAA in 1977. Assigned as replacement umpire in 1979, he worked 36 Major

League games. He resigned to attend college at the University of Wisconsin. He was a walk on for the baseball team and was then offered a full scholarship as a short relief pitcher. He graduated in 1982 with a degree in Secondary Education. Since then he has worked continuously in the field of recreation. He started as a substitute teacher then moved on to coaching high school basketball and baseball for both boys and girls teams. He also continued to officiate sports events throughout college and after. He moved to Florida in 1983 and worked at the City of Oakland Park Recreation Department and then moved to the Village of Palm Springs where he served as Director of Recreation from 1987 through 2002. He is currently employed as the Athletic Program Supervisor for the Village. He continued officiating sports until he was sidelined by Macular Degeneration in 2008. Mr. Stevenson received the National Federation Fastpitch Umpire of the Year award in 1989 and was inducted into the Florida Football Hall of Fame as an official in 2010. He is a member of the Coalition for Independent Living Options Board of Directors, the Kiwanis Club of Palm Springs and Big Brothers/Big Sisters. He began serving on the Florida Outreach Center for the Blind in 2009.

**Edna Strnad**, Member, Visually Impaired

Ms. Strnad has a form of macular degeneration known as pattern dystrophy. It has seriously affected her vision for 19 years and she has been legally blind for the past 5 years. She has taken advantage of FOCB's training for help with her iPhone. She is a graduate of Vassar College. A former account executive at advertising agencies in Ohio and Washington D.C, she has devoted much time to non-profit causes and continues to do so in retirement. She comes to us with experience in fundraising for Vassar College, the Junior League of Cleveland and the Hathaway Brown School in Shaker Heights, Ohio where she was Director of Development. She is also associated with the Junior League of the Palm Beaches.

**Jill Brondolo**, Member, Visually Impaired

Ms. Brondolo has been legally blind since age seven, as a result of Retinitis Pigmentosa. She holds the degree of Master of Education in Mental Health Counseling from Florida Atlantic University. She has over 25 years of experience providing educational support to students with learning disabilities. She currently teaches English as a second language at Spanish River Church. She is also Vice President of the Caitlin Brondolo Charitable Foundation, which supports the mission of preventing carbon monoxide poisoning. It also provides scholarships for children in need. Being visually impaired herself, and with a special interest in children, she has consented to taking an interest in FOCB and has recently joined its board.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **STAFF**

#### **Carolyn Lapp**, Executive Director, Blind

Ms. Lapp lost her sight at age 14 as the result of an automobile accident. "I cried for 5 minutes and then moved on." Originally from Circleville, Ohio, she graduated from Ft. Pierce Central High School with honors. She went on to earn an A.S. in Psychology from Valencia State College with a 4.0 GPA. Mrs. Lapp has worked with children from pre-school through elementary school on reading, spelling, math, language skills, as well as learning skills. She helped organize seven chapters of the National Federation of the Blind of Florida and was President of two of them. Mrs. Lapp served as Vice-President at the state level and chaired several committees and divisions.

Along with her husband Bill, who is also visually impaired, Ms. Lapp created the Florida Outreach Center for the Blind in 2003 because she felt the area needed a place where visually impaired people could go to be taught the skills that were necessary for success and independence.

Ms. Lapp directs all phases of the operation of FOCB, at the direction of the Board. All staff reports directly to her.

#### **Sarah Clark**, Certified Vision and Rehabilitation Therapist, Blind

Ms. Clark is a Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist, certified by ACVREP. She has a M.S. Degree with a Major in counseling from Barry University and a B.A. Majoring in Dance Therapy from Florida International University.

Ms. Clark began working as a Certified Vision and Rehabilitation Therapist at the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind in 2005. She trained and supervised department staff, as well as teaching clients Braille, adaptive technology, computers, personal management and recreational activities. In 2010, she moved to the Care Resource/Barry Family Enrichment Center providing counseling services to individuals, couples and families.

Ms. Clark is proficient in the use of technology adapted for the blind and has experience working with persons of all ages and disability levels. In her services to FOCB, she is responsible for overseeing the training programs provided by FOCB and ensures that they meet the requirements of the State of Florida Division of Blind Services.

**Manes Pacius**, Bookkeeper, Visually Impaired

Mr. Pacius comes to FOCB with skills in accounting and computer information systems. He completed his undergraduate at Mercer County College and Rider University in New Jersey and obtained his MBA from the University of Phoenix.

Mr. Pacius is fluent in French, Creole and Spanish. He is proficient in many forms of business software and use of the internet. Prior to joining FOCB, he held auditing and financially related positions with Holiday Inn, Copeland Companies and Bristol-Myers Squibb.

In addition to his duties as bookkeeper, he also provides instruction in various skills to visually impaired students for whom English is not their primary language. Mr. Pacius is also responsible for submitting reports and additional information into the State of Florida's AWARE system. He also manages the funds for the local Transportation Disadvantaged Program and is the Youth Minister at his Church.

**Jason Goldfield**, Assistive Technology Specialist, Blind

Mr. Goldfield is a specialist in Adaptive Technology, as well as in customer relations. He received his A.S. Degree in Computer Information Systems from Palm Beach State College. While at PBSC, he taught students in the use of software applications. Mr. Goldfield then worked as a Customer Service Resolution Specialist for Office Depot and advanced to Account Manager.

Mr. Goldfield has received an endorsement certificate in screen reader and magnification software from the State of Florida Division of Blind Services. At FOCB, Mr. Goldfield instructs students in all phases of adaptive technology for the visually impaired and blind. In addition to the PC, students may receive training on note takers, Victor Stream Reader, iPad, iPhone and the Apple Mac.

Mr. Goldfield is the President of the Palm Beach Chapter of the Florida Council for the Blind and has a guide dog named Max. I in 2014, he and his wife have extended their family tree by adopting a fourteen-year-old daughter.

**Maria (Luz) Norris**, Braille & Independent Living Skills Instructor, Blind

Ms. Norris is known as "Luz" to her friends and family. She was born with myopia, has glaucoma in her left eye and a detached retina in both eyes. She has been totally blind since 1987 due to a surgical procedure to attach her retinas.

Mrs. Norris has a degree in education from the Caldas University in Columbia and has supplemented that degree with courses at Palm Beach State College and the

Hadley School for the Blind. Prior to becoming employed with FOCB as an instructor in Braille and Independent Livings Skills, she taught those subjects at the Lighthouse for the Blind as a volunteer. She also worked as a despatcher for a toe-truck service. Mrs. Norris was one of the Center's first volunteer instructors and has supported it since it was organized.

**William Lapp**, Volunteer and Store Manager, Visually Impaired

Mr. Lapp has done it all. From working as a merchant marine on the Great Lakes to a three month hiking journey on the Appalachian Trail. From captain of a cross-country skiing team to hitch hiking across America. From landscaping to working at the Palm Beach Kennel Club. And all the while being severely visually impaired. Originally from upstate New York, he finally settled down in Florida more than thirty years ago when he met his wife, Carolyn. Mr. Lapp assisted Carolyn in organizing the Center and operating FOCB. In addition, he is a representative for Magnifying America, a company that provides low vision aids and is an authorized vendor for the Veterans Administration and the Florida Division of Blind Services. Through a special arrangement, FOCB displays a variety of low vision aids for purchase.