



# News & Notes

Quarterly Newsletter for Friends of the Guild

Spring 2008

## Young Professionals

The Guild's Young Professionals Board (YPB) held their first recruitment event in February to encourage other young adults to volunteer their time and make a difference.

The YPB was established in 2007 to raise the awareness of the Guild and its services to the Chicago community, raise money to support the Guild's programs for adults with vision loss and volunteer their time to the Guild's programs.

The YPB provides young adults, in their 20s and 30s, an opportunity to build their social network and participate in fun activities, all while helping to promote the Guild's mission.

If you or someone you know is interested in joining the YPB, please visit [www.guildfortheblind.org/YPB/](http://www.guildfortheblind.org/YPB/) or contact Cheryl Megurdichian at [cherylm@guildfortheblind.org](mailto:cherylm@guildfortheblind.org) or 312-236-8569. ●



Board members Sarah Fortini and Chrissy Snow with one of their guests.

## Adaptive Gardening

Gardening is one of Kathy Austin's favorite activities. "I think I was a farmer in a previous life," she says. "When I started losing my vision, I gradually came up with ways to continue gardening. I found it to be good therapy and a great way to enjoy the weather. I believe it is something everyone can do--whether it is growing herbs on a window sill or a full-scale garden outdoors."

As the Guild's Coordinator of Adult Rehabilitation, Kathy wanted to share her passion for gardening, and all the techniques she has developed, with our members. She held a workshop at the Guild during April to share her experience and the lessons she has learned with others. Annie McLaughlin, a Master Gardener of Garden Wizards in Homewood, was her special guest.



Kathy was a guest on the "Let's Talk Gardening" show on WGN Radio.

"Thanks so much for doing the gardening workshop. I especially liked the ideas on orientation and safety like the ping-pong balls, the nail apron on a bucket and ground level stone guides," wrote one attendee.

The Guild offers this workshop as part of its Next Steps programs for adults with new vision loss. ●

## Building Connections

Finding a job today requires more than experience and education--especially for people with vision loss. Who you know is often just as important as what you know.

The Guild's Employment Connection (EC) program is all about building networks and making those important connections. Danny recently found out how true this is.

He came to the Guild with a masters degree in e-commerce from DePaul University. He was looking for a position that would allow him to use his skills in web design and management. He also volunteered his time--developing a website for our Tech Exchange club.



Andrea, a former EC participant, contacted Lauri Dishman, Manager of Career Services, about a great internship opportunity for someone who was tech-savvy to test the website accessibility at a local nonprofit. Danny jumped at the chance.

After demonstrating his skills for a year, Danny was offered, and accepted, a full-time position as Interactive Marketing Specialist.

Our EC program prepares members for employment, helps them build their networking skills and provides job leads, networking opportunities, and connections to other visually impaired professionals. ●



**Guild for the Blind**  
Focused on You

## Spotlight On ...



### Jose Nonato

Jose came to the Guild with an interest in learning to use JAWS, a screen-reading program, with all the different software packages--especially email and the Internet.

"I wanted to improve my computer skills so I would have a better chance to find a job," Jose explains.

David Flament, the Guild's computer instructor was very impressed with Jose's dedication to the training and willingness to help his classmates. "Jose only missed one class in the four months of training," David reports. "And he showed a natural ability to tutor other students--with great patience and understanding."

Because of this ability, David asked Jose to volunteer as a tutor for students taking the training he had just completed.

"I enjoy helping people," Jose says. "Right now I am tutoring Fay, helping her to learn how to navigate around in Word using JAWS."

By providing this tutoring, the Guild is hoping to increase the number of students who successfully complete training from 80% to 85%.

Jose is also volunteering his time as a braille tutor at the Guild. We will be sure to keep you updated on the activities of this bright and enthusiastic young man. ●

## Message from the Executive Director

-- David J. Tabak

When people are told that their vision loss is permanent, they do not know where to turn for help. Today there are many programs and services that help people remain independent and productive. The problem is, if people don't know they exist — how do they find them?

For people with vision loss, the answer is simple — *Guild Briefs*, our free monthly newsletter. For over 15 years, Guild staff have been condensing information into short, easy-to-read articles that provide an overview of services available, locally and nationally, and a contact name and number for more information.

To make *Guild Briefs* accessible to everyone, we distribute it in large print, braille, audio tape, on our web site and via e-mail. In addition to alerting our members to Guild programs, we provide information on the services of other



**"For people with vision loss, the answer is simple — *Guild Briefs*."**

organizations, the latest in adaptive technology, advances in medical research and information on recreational activities. In this month's edition of *Guild Briefs*, members will learn about the Guild's many programs being offered in May, a new portable closed circuit television, a new toll free service that provides news and sports information and an opportunity to learn how to sail.

Even though *Guild Briefs* is one of our most popular programs, we are currently conducting a telephone survey to ask our readers how we can improve it. It is truly gratifying to see the number of people who have answered our call for volunteers. Guild

Board members, staff, volunteers and donors--many who are also *Guild Briefs* subscribers--are reaching out to *Guild Briefs* readers to ask their ideas for making our newsletter even better.

*Guild Briefs* truly represents the best of the Guild. Your support of the Guild allows us to provide this vital information to those who need it. Thank you for making a difference. ●

## Meeting our Match

The Guild was one of 14 organizations challenged by **Community Memorial Foundation** to raise new or increased contributions from individual donors.

Guild staff and board participated in six workshops that helped us improve our communication and fundraising strategies.

In addition to meeting this challenge and earning a \$10,000 matching grant, the Guild received special recognition for the largest increase in the number of donors to our annual fund--almost 400!

We thank the board and staff at Community Memorial Foundation and

all our donors for their generosity in helping us rise to the challenge. ●



*David Tabak, Executive Director, Cheryl Megurdichian, Director of Development, and Diane Laux, Guild Board Member, accept the award from Allyson Zak, Board Chair of Community Memorial Foundation.*

## Tribute Gifts

Tribute gifts are a great way to commemorate a special occasion, honor the memory of a loved one or simply let someone know you are thinking of them. We received the following tribute gifts during the first quarter of 2008:

*Memory of Didimo and Zenobia Barbantini*

Ms. Liduina Barbantini

*Memory of Msgr. Raymond Beard*

Ms. Loleta Vogt

*Memory of Mary Bolda*

Mr. and Mrs. Harvey R. Beckman

*Memory of Dr. Robert Brennan, Sr.*

Mrs. Lorraine Brennan

*Memory of Debbie Brusslan*

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Krause

*Memory of Mary R. Castro*

Ms. Cathy Calm

Patricia and Jane Fieberg

Ms. Carol Napoli

Robert and Joann Nash

Ms. Patricia Prozzi

James and Kathleen Russell

Mr. Mark Wolk

*Memory of Roy Dakin*

Ms. Helen A. Knapp

*Memory of Joseph J. Grifasi*

Bob and Mary Allen

Chuck and Jane Grifasi

Paul C. Grifasi

*Memory of Erwin Hanc*

Ms. Dolores Hanc

*Honor of Lois Hobart*

Mr. Jay Frey

*Honor of Estelle Kania*

Ms. Mary M. Kania

*Honor of Art Krause*

Karen Lieberman

*Memory of Lorraine Vivian Kudlo*

Ms. Eva Brncich

Honor of Diane Laux's tenure on Board of Directors

Ms. Mary Moster

*Honor of Diane Laux on her birthday*

Ms. Enriqueta Bauer

*Memory of Bill and Monica Lynch*

Anonymous

*Honor of Sylvia Lynch's 86th birthday*

Sara M. Lynch and Steven Ayre

*Memory of Mary and James Mahoney*

Mrs. Clare O'Such

*Memory of Francis O'Such*

Mrs. Clare O'Such

*Memory of Ronald Pahssen, Beloved Husband*

Mrs. Marianne Pahssen

*Honor of Gramma Rose*

Ms. Brenda Lattanzio

*Memory of William Rubendunst*

Mrs. Joanne Rubendunst

*Honor of Paul Seidler*

Linda and Mark Grua

*Memory of Mrs. Laura Serrurier*

Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Vaughan

*Memory of Dominic J. Trotta*

Mrs. Patricia Smith

Mr. and Mrs. Steven D. Talerico

Mr. David Thorne

Wal-Mart Vision Center

*Memory of Peter Zapotocky*

Tracy and Mark Zetti

## Remembering the Guild in Your Will

Bequests and other planned gifts have played an important role in the growth and continued operations of the Guild. In January, the Guild received a gift of \$20,000 from the Robert F. Stone Trust. Mr. Stone was a founding member of our board of directors and a long-time supporter of the Guild.

Providing for the Guild in your will helps to ensure that the programs you currently support will continue to serve those who need them most.

To leave a gift to the Guild, you may use the following language:

"I give to the Guild for the Blind in Chicago, IL the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ (dollar amount) OR \_\_\_\_\_% (percentage amount) of the residue of my estate to be used at the discretion of its Board of Directors."

Please be sure to discuss your plans with a professional advisor to determine the arrangements that will make the most sense for you. ●

**Over the past five years, the Guild has received 14% of its revenue from bequests.**

## 2007 Annual Report

The Guild has recently completed its annual report for 2007. We are happy to report that the design and printing of this report were donated to the Guild by SGDP, a Chicago design firm that provides many design services to us.

We will be mailing out copies of this report to all our donors who made gifts of \$100 or more. The report can also be seen on our website, [www.guildfortheblind.org](http://www.guildfortheblind.org). ●

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Return Service Requested

## Mission

The Guild for the Blind serves individuals who are blind or visually impaired, including those with new vision loss. The Guild strives to promote positive attitudes about visual impairment and to assist its members in achieving dignity and independence at home, in the workplace and in the community.

## Recycling

When her husband passed away, one of our donors asked us if we knew of anyone who could make good use of his gently used CCTV. We immediately thought of Trinity Acres, a community that offers subsidized housing for seniors on Chicago's south side where we had presented our New Visions workshops. ●



*Geraldine, pictured with Polly Abbott, is thrilled with the new CCTV.*

## Community Service



*Donna shows her mother, Sylvia, a wallet with compartments for different bills.*

Elmhurst was the latest stop for the Guild's community-based low vision workshops. The **Elmhurst Noon Lions Club** and the **Elmhurst Public Library** joined forces to underwrite the cost of a New Visions workshop in their community.

New Visions is a series of four workshops that provide practical information, tips and resources for adults

with new vision loss. Our goal is to make their lives safer, less stressful and more enjoyable.

We partner with community organizations--such as senior centers, libraries, retirement homes and community centers--to bring this program directly to communities throughout the Chicago area. Last year we visited 29 different communities and helped 607 adults adjust to life with vision loss. ●



*Edwin Hill, Elmhurst Noon Lions (and past Guild Board President) and Joyce McIntosh, Elmhurst Public Library, pose with Polly Abbott, the Guild's Manager of Adult Rehabilitation (pictured left to right).*