You are receiving this monthly eNewsletter because you or your child is enrolled in the children’s programs at the Center for the Visually Impaired. These updates will come to your inbox every first Friday of the month.

Happenings in December

BEGIN

Make a Gift Today!
At this time of year, we are especially thankful for the year-round
BEGIN students ended the 2017 school year with a fun-filled “Polar Express Day.” Everyone wore their pajamas to class and the students decorated cookies, opened gifts, completed holiday-themed crafts, drank hot cocoa, and read the Polar Express book.

A huge thank you to Ms. Michele, Ms. Emily, and Ms. Joan for making this special day happen!

We were thrilled to see our BEGIN students and their families at our annual Holiday Party on Saturday, December 16th. It was an absolute pleasure to spend time with friends and family, and enjoy one another during the holidays. The students received donated teddy bears and got their photo taken with our very own Santa!

We want to wish everyone a happy, healthy, and productive start to 2018! We are excited to continue our programming and can’t wait to see all the learning, progress, and success these next months have in store.

STARS

support of the wonderful people that are part of the CVI community. We couldn’t provide the life-changing programs we offer without your generous commitment. Please make a gift today! It is easy and secure to make a gift online on our Donate Now page.

Parent Info & Resources

Center for the Visually Impaired

Georgia Department of Education – Visual Impairment/Blindness

American Printing House for the Blind (APH)

Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI)

Paths to Literacy

Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER)

The Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)

Special Education Services and Supports (Georgia)

Individualized Education Plan – Explained!

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

GaPINES

Georgia Sensory
**A Day in After School Enrichment....**

Instruction on Tuesday afternoons is jammed packed with learning and fun! STARS staff works constantly to ensure our students are receiving well-rounded accessible instruction that they can take with them each time they leave CVI.

As students arrive at CVI on Tuesday afternoons, they travel down to our Lower Level activity room and independently choose an activity to participate in. Activities offered include Braille, technology, homework completion, social skills, and art.

At 3:30 PM, students and staff transition into direct instruction. First, students reenergize and get their blood pumping with 30 minutes of fitness using a variety of activities. Some of the favorites include yoga, sit-ups, and pushups. A little healthy competition pushes our students to work even harder!

Next, students transition into smaller groups for project-based learning, STEAM activities. With the theme this year of math/money, students keep an individual, running budget in their own notebook, using their primary learning mode (large print, Braille, etc). Staff helps facilitate peer-to-peer learning, problem-solving through probing questions, and ongoing feedback to encourage generalization of skills. As students successfully complete tasks throughout programming, they earn “money” to use in the VisAbility Hub. By engaging in this activity repetitively, students gain a sense of how to budget their money, and what it means to spend, to save, and to give to others.

Activities of daily living lessons typically vary by week. Students practice cooking skills by using measuring cups, reading from and following a recipe, and working in partners or small groups to complete associated tasks. Students are also provided with well-being instruction. This year started with "bullying." Staff facilitates the instructional piece, providing important and relevant information about the topic, and having students practice skills through situational role play.

Music continues to be a favorite part of the day for our elementary-age students. Ms. Toni provides small group instruction with instruments, similar to a typical school setting. However, by providing the instruction at CVI, Ms. Toni and other staff can focus more on individualized strategies to use and play the instruments, body concepts, spatial awareness, working within a group setting, and exposure to additional skills that can support recreation and leisure.

After school enrichment wraps-up with the students and staff gathering and taking turns positively recognizing one another for specific accomplishments throughout the afternoon. Sitting in on

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BEGIN Teacher of the Visually Impaired
this part of programming is especially fulfilling. Our students all have the respect, and consideration for one another that we so heavily emphasize within our instruction. The kindness our students share with one another is something we love seeing each week.

Another party in the books!
What a wonderful turnout we had at our annual Holiday Party on Saturday, December 16th. It was truly wonderful to see 23 STARS students and their families come together! We hope those of you who came enjoyed the lunch, gift sharing, and chance to catch up with other families. A huge thanks to Verizon Wireless for decorating the event space and donating the gifts. Additional thanks to volunteers from Junior League of Atlanta for all of their help to make the day a success, and of course our amazing staff!

Mark Your Calendars

January 8 – Welcome back to our Beginners/Builders students! BEGIN class starts at 10:45 AM!
January 9 – Welcome back to our After School Enrichment students (STARS)!
January 11 – Welcome back to our Trailblazers students!
BEGIN class starts at 10:30 AM!
January 15 – MLK Holiday — CVI Closed
January 20 – Welcome back to our Saturday Academy students (STARS)!
January 31 – Circus of the Senses
February 25 – Cruise with CVI

Spotlight

Shelia Gooch

(Shelia Gooch)
Sheila Gooch is retiring from CVI after 24 years of service, here is her first-hand account of her time here:

My involvement with CVI is a little different. I did not train for, or apply for a job here. It all just evolved. I was raised in a military family and we changed schools at least once a year. As a result, I have no childhood friends now. So, my family is the most important thing to me which explains how involved with my children and grandchildren I became.

I married young, at 19, and thankfully it has worked. We will be celebrating 45 years December 16th. I stayed home with my children, volunteering at the church’s nursery, daycare, and school as my children grew.

I first came in contact with CVI in 1993 when my granddaughter was diagnosed with Optic Nerve Hypoplasia. Anne McComisky, from BEGIN, came to our house, where Alexandria and her mother were living while my son was stationed in Okinawa with the Marines. She did an evaluation and sent one of her wonderful instructors to our house on a regular basis. When Alexandria started BEGIN I drove her and stayed for the parent support group, which helped us get through that grieving stage. Now Alexandria’s visual impairment is just so much another part of her as any other characteristic. I learned Braille in a parent class BEGIN offered. I would encourage all parents/grandparents to do because I have been able to help Alexandria with homework, write her letters, and cards.

Alexandria then went to STARS. I learned Nemeth code there to help her with math homework. I also started to volunteer more – at the front desk, taking students to class, in classes, giving rides to students to the after school program. If anyone knows Annie Maxwell, you know that most people would do whatever she wanted. I volunteered every day, all day, for four weeks in STARS summer camp. The next year, probably 1999 or 2000, Annie hired me on staff. I worked only summer camp for several years continuing to volunteer in after school. I volunteered in the ADL classes with Magnolia Lyons. I would call Magnolia and Annie mentors. I took Independent Living Skills classes and Teaching Blind and Visually Impaired Children with Other Disabilities through Hadley. I have no degree, but after I started leading STARS ADL classes, I received a lot of mentoring, training from Annie, Magnolia, and a couple of generous CVI ADL instructors for the first couple of years.

I am so proud of the students that have been in my classes, and some of them are co-workers now. They are doing great and they are wonderful people. My goal was to help each child be as independent as was possible for that child and that's what STARS
and BEGIN has done for my family. And besides, that allowed me to be a part of it and to meet so many fantastic children. I never planned for any of this, I was just a grandmother helping my granddaughter, became a volunteer, and then a staff member.

On behalf of the staff, I would like to thank you for all you have done to help improve the Center for the Visually Impaired and the clients you have personally impacted over the last 24 years. CVI, and especially the STARS Program, has been fortunate to have you as a colleague, instructor, and friend. You will be truly missed. I wish I had the benefit of working with you for a longer time. We wish you, and your husband, the very best in your retirement on the lake!

Sincerely,

Stephanie Pizza

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CVI News

Cruise with CVI

You are invited, along with your friends and family, to a special event!

Sunday, February 25, 2018
Center for the Visually Impaired
739 West Peachtree St. NW, Atlanta, GA 30308
2:00 PM-4:30 PM

Join us for light refreshments, client speakers, and a cruise
around CVI to experience our client training first-hand, including white cane techniques, braille, assistive technology and much more!

Collect stamps on your passport as you travel to various ports throughout the building for your chance to win a travel package!

**Please RSVP to Deborah Burcham at 404-602-4279 or dburcham@cviga.org by February 19.**