



A Fun Week in Summer School

Marlane Fuhrmann is 19, and finally acting her age. There was the teen drama of buying a prom dress then breaking up with her boyfriend, getting her grades up to more A's than her mostly B's and C's, and making plans to go away to college in the fall.

It wasn't long ago that Marlane was acting like an adult—a mother, actually, to her little sister—a role she played since she was 7 years old. Marlane's life story is incredibly sad, starting even before she was born. When her birth mother was pregnant with Marlane and in her third trimester, she was in a car accident that caused damage to her unborn daughter's eyes.

Marlane was born with nystagmus, a vision condition characterized by involuntary eye movement that often results in reduced vision. Her eyes jump around, often in different

directions, making it difficult to focus on objects. She wore glasses as a toddler and had surgery at age 4 to correct her "sideways" vision. She had to turn her head sideways in order to see straight. The surgery worked, but by the time she was 10 her vision worsened.

"For my whole life I com-

(continued on page 6)



In this issue...

**Evening Hours Available
for Low Vision Exams** page 5

Person of Vision Honored page 3

Contract Work Available page 4

Preschool Vision Screenings page 8

Volunteer Spotlight pages 12, 13

President's Perspective

Partnerships

Thanks to the rich 100-plus-year-old history of Blind and Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh, we have developed many long-term partnerships with other nonprofit agencies in the Pittsburgh area and beyond. Over the last year, we have placed a strong focus on strengthening these existing partnerships and developing new ones that will provide opportunities and benefits for everyone involved.



Erika Arbogast

Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh



We are excited about two new successful partnerships we have formed through this process. The first is a partnership with Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh (RTP), which is located in Green Tree. With United Way funding, our organizations have joined forces to implement a project that will touch more than 1,300 seniors, their caregiv-

ers and family members each year. The focus of this project is to provide seniors the tools necessary to stay safe and live independently in their homes. Not only has our partnership helped to develop a reciprocal referral system between the two organizations, but it has also allowed seniors enrolled in BVRs's existing programs to have access to free emergency home safety modifications completed by skilled contractors. RTP program participants with vision impairments now learn about, and have access to, BVRs's services, as well.

Turtle Creek Valley MH/MR

BVRS has also forged a partnership with Turtle Creek Valley MH/MR that is very beneficial to both organizations. On August 25, 2011, Turtle Creek moved its Children and Family Services programs to a wing on BVRS's third floor. This move is a win-win situation for both organizations as it helps to generate revenue for BVRS and provides a more professional setting for Turtle Creek MH/MR services. Since Turtle Creek MH/MR owns the adjacent building, we have also begun contracting with them for maintenance services within our building, which generates a cost savings for BVRS and additional revenue for Turtle Creek.



(continued on page 3)


Morgan O'Brien to Receive Person of Vision Award

Morgan O'Brien, President and CEO of Peoples Natural Gas, will receive the 2011 Person of Vision Award at the Person of Vision Celebration scheduled for Thursday, October 13, 2011, at 6 p.m. at the Westin Convention Center Hotel located in downtown Pittsburgh. Mr. O'Brien has been a leader in the Pittsburgh community for many years and has served on many boards of directors including the United Way of Allegheny County and the Greater Pittsburgh Council of the Boy Scouts of America.




Raymond Buehler, Jr., is serving as the Honorary Chair and will present the award to Mr. O'Brien at the conclusion of the event. Mr. Buehler is the President and CEO of the Schneider Downs accounting firm. Jane K. Yallum, a member of our board of directors whose sister Kara Snyder is a graduate of our programs, is serving as the event chair.

An inspiring evening is planned including a presentation by a recent graduate of our Personal Adjustment to Blindness Training and Access Technology Center as well as a new video that describes the impact BVRS has made on the lives of hundreds of people.

If you are interested in purchasing tickets for the event, please contact the Development Department at 412-368-4400. 

President's Perspective

(continued from page 2)

Currently, we are developing a three-year strategic plan in which building partnerships is a key objective. Partnerships can provide an opportunity for organizations to provide services in the most efficient way possible. We believe that the more successful relationships we have with others the more opportunities we can create for the individuals we serve. 




Contract Services Available Through BVRS Program


BVRS offers a number of services and contract work for businesses, including assembly of plastic ware wrapped with napkins to catering companies and dining facilities.

One of our most recent customers is Jimmy's Corporate Catering in Downtown Pittsburgh, which among its customers are movie production companies filming in the Pittsburgh area.

The assembly work is done by participants in our Employment Transition program, which offers job opportunities for adults with vision loss and other disabilities. Through training and varied work experiences—such as plastic ware assembly—participants develop the skills needed for successful employment.

For more details on this service or other contract work—such as assembly work, sealing and labeling envelopes, and shredding—call 412-368-4400. 

Save the Date!

Do you ski or snow board or know someone who does? If so, please consider supporting our 28th annual Corporate Cup Ski Race & Fun Day, which will be held on a Friday in February 2012 (date to be announced) at Seven Springs. For more information, contact Cindy Smith, 412-368-4400 or csmith@pghvis.org. 



Introducing Our Newest Instructors

Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh is pleased to introduce our two new instructors: Shelley LaVara, rehabilitation instructor, and Margaret Winn, orientation and mobility instructor.



Margaret Winn



Shelley LaVara

cianry and went on to manage a private optical practice.

“After hearing about orientation and mobility, I knew that it was the new career I had been searching for,” Margaret explains.


Shelley has a bachelor of science degree in interdisciplinary health services from Western Michigan University.

“During an internship, I was introduced to the field of blindness and low vision, and knew that it was the right career for me,” Shelley says.

She continued her education at Western Michigan and received a master of arts degree in vision rehabilitation therapy.

Shelley recently completed an internship at the Greater Detroit Agency for the Blind and Visually Impaired where she provided in-home instruction to older adults coping with vision loss and facilitated day camps for children with vision impairments.

Margaret has a bachelor of science degree in health care administration from the University of Michigan, Flint. Throughout college, she worked part time at an optometry clinic. After graduation, she received a certification from the American Board of Opti-

She received a master’s degree in orientation and mobility from Western Michigan University. 

Evening Appointments Available

Beginning in October, the Low Vision Program at Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh will have evening hours available for appointments on Tuesdays.

The new hours are Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Tuesday 8:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., and Friday 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at our Homestead site, 1800 West Street.

The Low Vision Program provides services to people who have some usable vision. Our specially trained optometrist performs an exam to determine a client’s level of vision, and then prescribes optical aids designed to maximize remaining eyesight.

To schedule an appointment, please call 412-368-4400.

Teen Spends Fun Week in Summer School

(continued from page 1)

pensated,” Marlane said. “I would sit up front in class to see the board.” She actually didn’t realize how bad her vision was because there were problems at home. “I didn’t worry about my eyes.”

To make a sad, long story short: Marlane and her little sister are now with a foster mother, and she relies heavily on her strong faith.

Marlane spent a week this summer at Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh in the Access Technology program, learning Internet research, word processing, basic Windows® concepts, among other technologies. She said her training at BVRS has helped her be more specific in conducting Internet searches, has given her a better understanding of programs like Zoom-Text, which enlarges the entire computer screen, and has taught her how to customize the computer screen.




Marlane with her BVRS instructor Tracey Morsek.

cellent student, according to BVRS staff, considering she never received special accommodations in school until she was a senior this past year. Her foster mother made sure she was examined by a specialist who has dealt with many cases of nystagmus. And she now wears contact lenses and has hopes of maybe one day getting a driver’s license —limited to daytime driving.

“When I graduated from high school I was so excited because I never thought I would,” Marlane said. “And my vision is improving when I thought it never would.”

Marlane is attending the University of Pittsburgh Greensburg campus this fall, majoring in psychology. She hopes to be a social worker.

“I feel like I’ve been through hell for 18 years, and now I have all these people who help me and care for me. I’m breathless...” 

6 Marlane proved to be an ex-

Succeeding in the Workplace


Jobs are hard enough—you worry about keeping them, you worry about finding them. Throw in a disability, and the challenges multiply. Throw in multiple disabilities, and you wonder if you'll ever work again.

Susan Rodgers is both completely blind and completely deaf—a victim of Usher syndrome, an inherited disease whose major symptoms are hearing loss and an eye disorder called retinitis pigmentosa. She worked at a bank for 33 years, but when her vision failed she had to leave.

Susan made her way to Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh, and is a recent graduate of the Deaf Blind Program, one of our newest programs and one of only a few in the United States. It is modeled after the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf Youths and Adults in New York. Students are trained in personal adjustment to deaf-blindness, job readiness and job coaching, with the goal of helping individuals find competitive employment.

Susan started the Deaf Blind program on May 8 and finished Sept. 2, when she was placed as a dishwasher at Sunrise Assisted Living in Upper St. Clair, working two 8-hour shifts each week.

“Between the time she started here at BVRS until the time she left, Susan completely blossomed into a competent, confident woman,” according to Ashley Norkus, coordinator of BVRS’s Deaf Blind services.

The Deaf Blind Program was launched in February, with an initial goal to serve six deaf blind individuals and to place four into competitive employment. To date, 13 individuals are receiving services of which five are working competitively. 



Susan Rodgers at her job at Sunrise Assisted Living.

Achieving Goals

Teaming Up for the Kids

BVRS's foremost contribution to the prevention of blindness is its Preschool Vision Screening program, which has served the children of Allegheny County through contributions from our donors for close to 45 years.


Each year, a team of BVRS staff with the help of nearly 600 volunteers screen more than 12,000 preschoolers for a variety of conditions. These free screenings have led to the identification of correctable eye problems in nearly 700 children each year. One in 20 children has an undetected vision problem, which if caught by the time a child is 3 has a 95 percent correction rate. Once a child reaches the age of 7, the correction rate drops to only 5 percent.

While vision screening is mandatory for school-aged children, preschoolers are not screened unless their preschool or day care centers arrange for BVRS's Preschool Vision Screening program, which checks for color

discrimination, muscle balance and visual acuity. Our screeners go about their work in a fun manner,

telling the children: "These games will check just how well your beautiful eyes are working." The children play a painting game to see how well they trace shapes and a peek-a-boo game in which their eyes are covered and uncovered to view pictures and letters. When the games are over, they receive a Peepers the Frog sticker that says, "I had my eyes checked today."

If a problem is detected during the screening, the child is referred to an eye care professional. Vision screenings do not replace professional eye exams.

To learn about becoming a volunteer Preschool Vision Screener or to schedule a screening site, call 412-368-4400, ext. 2293. 



Conditions that affect a child's vision:

Amblyopia, or lazy eye, affects more than 1 in 50 children. One eye sees images clearly, while the other sees distorted images. Signs include favoring one eye, tilting the head, rubbing the eyes, blinking excessively, drifting eye in certain conditions, complaining of blurred vision.

Strabismus, or crossed eyes, is an abnormal coordination of eye movements and often is the cause of amblyopia. With this, eyes may turn in, out, up or down due to imbalanced eye muscles.



Each summer, BVRS hosts teenagers who are blind or vision impaired for a five-week program that prepares them for college or a career. As part of the program, teenage volunteers from the Pittsburgh region accompany our students to places like Kennywood, Pirate baseball games, Sandcastle and camping or just spend time with them in the evening and on weekends. Enjoy these snapshots of their 2011 summer at BVRS!



For Your Eyes Only

Approximately 150 guests attended the annual "For Your Eyes Only" tailgate party fundraiser June 17 at the Boyd and Blair Vodka Distillery in Glenshaw. Michele Antonelli served as chairperson, with Giant Eagle as title sponsor; Boyd and Blair co-owner Prentiss Orr provided tours of the distillery; and guests enjoyed the music provided by the Soul Searchers. Buffalo Bills assistant head coach and Pittsburgh native Dave Wannstedt and his wife, Jan, were the hosts; WTAE TV news anchor Mike Clark was the master of ceremonies. More than \$32,000 was raised.



Dave and Jan Wannstedt, Mike Clark, Michele and Richard Antonelli, and Prentiss Orr.



A post-surgery Mike Clark sings his version of "You May Be Right."



Jan Wannstedt enjoys the wonderful appetizers provided by Giant Eagle.

Teres Lucot (left), owner of Trunk Shows Boutique who donated a portion of her sales from the evening, pictured with Dana Roberts and Jan Chadwick.





At left, the winning team for the one-day, 18-hole team scramble was (from left) Brad Behling, Carl Behling, Jr., Brooks Behling and Bud Behling, representing Small Arms Manufacturing. The team was captained by former Steeler Mike Merriweather. Below former Steeler Andy Russell (left) presents the "Old Ranger" award to Dwayne Woodruff.

Steelers Alumni Golf Classic

Approximately 140 golfers took to the links at Diamond Run Golf Club on July 25 for the 15th annual Steelers Alumni Charity Golf Classic sponsored by 84 Lumber. More than \$100,000 was raised.

As part of the festivities each year, the Ray Mansfield "Old Ranger" award goes to the former Steeler who exhibits the qualities of charity, community service and good fellowship as exemplified by Ray Mansfield, in whose memory the tournament is held. This year the award went to Dwayne Woodruff, former Steeler and current Common Pleas Court judge. The 2011 golf committee included Chuck Noll, honorary chairman; Joe Gordon, tournament chair; Tom Averell, Craig Bingham, Carl Dozzi, Paul and Martha Eberhardt, Judd Gordon, Lisa Tomasovich and Sal Tommarello.



Stay Informed

Between issues of the BVRS newsletter, check our web site: www.blindvr.org. We are also on Facebook and would "like" to have you as our next "friend." Just type Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh in the Search box or go to www.facebook.com/pages/Blind-Vision-Rehabilitation-Services-of-Pittsburgh/355511657119.

Volunteers

Pictured at right Joe Ratay, Jeff Turner, John Pipakis, Alex Tybl, Lisa Calabria, Jessica Chalfant and Ashley Wolford, teenagers who volunteered for our five-week summer program to help other teens who are blind or visually impaired.



Pictured at left helping out with a mailing this fall were (front to back on left) Betty Dzurikanin, Louise O'Hanlon, Marcie Borsch, Joan Dietzen, (on right) Mary J. Shope, Kitty Hunter and Bernie Stoebe.



This summer, volunteers from the Elmhurst Group did some painting and helped to make our picnic area more accessible. They were led by President Bill Hunt and CFO Chris Witherow, pictured above. At right is Andy Gildersleeve, director of development and construction.





This fall, our friends from PPG (pictured above) — John McQuade, Matt Wehrle, Mohinder Dick, Crysta Wilson, Joanne Miller, Sena Miller, Matt Rowe and Mike Kiss — spent their "Day of Caring" at BVRs. At right, Crysta and Matt at work painting our lobby area.

THANK YOU!

Your Help Wanted at BVRs

Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh needs volunteers to help with driving clients to and from doctor's offices, the airport and the bus station, serving as escorts for group activities like bowling, shopping, movies and other events, and helping staff who are blind or vision-impaired with various tasks.

As a volunteer, you can participate on a set schedule or on an as-needed basis, and your special talents or interests can be accommodated. Training is provided.

For more information, contact Nancy Schepis, volunteer coordinator, 412-368-4400 or nschepis@pghvis.org. 

Agency Retirements

by Carole Nadzam
BVRS Executive Assistant

Early September always brings changes to the surroundings; but this year, the changes around BVRS were more noticeable than normal. It was then that two members of the senior management team chose to retire— Jim Baumgartner, Vice President of Financial and Administrative Services, and Carol Nagle, Director of Client Services.

JIM BAUMGARTNER

Jim has served BVRS and its predecessors, Pittsburgh Vision Services and the Greater Pittsburgh Guild for the Blind, in different capacities over the years. In October 1994, Jim became a board member of The Guild and eventually, did work as a consultant that led to his joining the PVS staff as Supervisor of Accounting. Jim was then named Vice President of Financial and Administrative Services.



During his tenure, Jim willingly accepted leadership duties for the

agency on several occasions when two consecutive executive officers were forced to step away from their roles due to health concerns. He personified and surpassed the definition of Second-in-Command, and guided the agency through difficult transitions with a quiet professionalism and genuine compassion for those BVRS serves.

Among his many interests, Jim plans to enjoy the time he will have to bike and travel. He and his wife, Stephanie, live in the North Hills and are the parents of two sons and one daughter and the grandparents of three girls.

CAROL NAGLE

In 2003, Pittsburgh Vision Services was fortunate to bring on board Carol Nagle in the role of Case Manager. She brought her considerable talent and experience to this newly established facet of the agency and helped it to grow into the crucial part it plays today.




(continued from page 14)

Within a little more than a year, Carol was named Coordinator of Case Management. The year 2007 brought Carol an additional role—Director of Community Services, and two years later, she assumed the position of Director of Client Services. With the creation of this new department, which combined Community Services and both the former Vocational and Rehabilitation Services departments, Carol coordinated efforts to bring all aspects of services for clients into one streamlined process. Through her efforts and those of her dedicated staff, individuals seeking services through BVRS were assured the seamless and

swift delivery of the best the agency has to offer. Throughout her time at BVRS, Carol truly exemplified the ideal of helping people with vision loss and other disabilities achieve their goals.

Carol and her husband, Bill, who have one daughter, enjoy the outdoors. She is also a very talented cross-stitch artist who created the beautiful pictures that always hung in her office. True to her spirit of dedication, Carol has promised to volunteer her services as a Preschool Vision Screener.


Congratulations, best wishes, and sincere thanks are extended to Jim and Carol as they celebrate this change in their personal lives. 

In the bullpen...

With the retirements of Jim and Carol, the BVRS Management Team has undergone some exciting changes in personnel and in responsibilities.

GARY VAMOS, former Supervisor of Accounting, is now Chief Financial Officer. **BARBARA PETERSON**, former Employment Opportunity Program Coordinator, is taking Carol's place as Director of Client Services.

BRIAN GLASS, previously Information Services Coordinator, is now Director of Information Services and Facilities; **DIANE PAKLER**, Director of Human Resources, adds Prevention of Blindness to her responsibilities.

These directors join **CONSTANCE SCHWARTZ-BEDO**, Director of Development and Public Relations, and **JEFFREY SPAN**, Director of PBA Industries and PBA Products & Services, Inc., in reporting to BVRS President Erika Arbogast. 



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BVRS is a 101-year-old nonprofit agency that serves people who are blind, vision impaired, or have other disabilities. The agency is an equal opportunity employer and service provider and does not discriminate against anyone, regardless of age, sex, race, religion, ethnic background, national origin, or disability.

A copy of the official registration and financial statement may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 800-743-0999.

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