



August 2009



Empowering Independent Living for the Visually Impaired

Upcoming Events

VisionWalk

October 3, 2009 - 9am
Denver City Park

VisionWalk is the national signature fundraising event of the Foundation Fighting Blindness. Since its inception in the Spring of 2006, the program has raised over \$8 million to fund sight-saving research. As promising treatments move into critical human studies, the need for research funding is greater than ever before. For more information on VisionWalk, contact Richard Faubion, Director of Development, at (720) 207-8362, or email him at RFaubion@FightBlindness.org

“Keeping Eyes on The Future” Breakfast Fundraiser

Wednesday, November 4 - 7:15am to 8:30am
The Denver Athletic Club

Mark your calendars for November 4th for the first **Ensign Breakfast Fundraiser** in Denver! This unique breakfast event is designed to raise awareness and funds for Ensign Skills Center, which in turn helps the low-vision population. Imagine not being able to read a book, look at family photos, or even prepare a meal because your vision is so limited. This is a reality for millions of people, and Ensign Skills Center has designed a comprehensive program that gives independence back to those dealing with vision loss. The breakfast event is free, and though it is a fundraiser, there is no maximum or minimum gift required to attend. We do need Table Captains to help fill tables with people who might be interested in supporting Ensign. If you'd like to volunteer to be a Table Captain, please call Liana Camacho at 303-757-4500.

Enightful Tips

Cooking Tips for the Visually Impaired

By Rhonda Brantley

As someone who has experienced significant vision loss due to retinitis pigmentosa, I have had to learn ways to manage in the kitchen. Many people who are blind or visually impaired are very capable when it comes to preparing meals. Here are some tips and techniques I have learned over the years. The main point I want to stress here is that low vision shouldn't stop you from doing the things you love - enjoy cooking and be safe!



- Mark the controls on your oven with brightly colored paint or small strips of Velcro. This way you can tell what temperature is being used.
- If you purchase the same type of cake mix or any other product frequently, take the time to write the package directions down in large print or record them with a portable tape recorder.
- Sometimes it's a lot more difficult to tell when cookies are brown or the rolls hit that perfect golden color. I find it easier to time things and they turn out nearly the same each time. Use a raised line timer or a talking watch or clock to determine just how long those cookies need to bake.
- Put salt and pepper in clear dispensers so the color difference is visible.
- When measuring small amounts of liquids like vanilla or almond extract, use an eye dropper; it holds a teaspoon of liquid and beats trying to hit a measuring spoon with an expensive liquid. You can also use a medicine syringe found at your local drugstore for measuring larger amounts. Simply have someone pull the syringe out to the different levels and mark the plunger with a sharp knife. You'll know where ½ teaspoon or 1 tablespoon is without pouring at all.
- Listen to your food. This sounds a bit strange, but if you pay close attention, you will find out that a grilled cheese sounds different as it browns. The same goes for bacon and steak. It won't take long to get the hang of it.
- Measure water before boiling it.

- Arrange your kitchen cabinets so that you always keep the cans of carrots or peas in the same place; this will make it easier to find what you need. If this is hard to do because someone is always moving things about, try putting one rubber band on carrots and two on peas. You can also use a brightly colored sticker to identify different contents. It will be easy to work out your own code.
- Add an extra light in your kitchen that is brighter than usual. This will help with hard to read recipes and instructions.
- Store your dry goods such as flour and sugar in different sized containers. It will make things much easier than trying to read the bag, plus you can easily measure them with a scoop.
- It sometimes helps to use a contrasting colored bowl or plate with different food. For example, stir up a yellow cake batter in a dark blue bowl, and brownies in a white bowl. The contrast will make things easier to see.
- Use oven mitts that come further up your arm. This will keep you from accidentally bumping your arm on the oven door. Be sure to keep handles on the stove top pointed in the same direction each time; this makes it less likely to bump one accidentally.
- Use scissors more often than knives for tasks such as cutting pizza, skinning chicken, chopping herbs, etc.
- Use only the front burners to avoid a burn when reaching to the back burners on the stove.
- Use a muffin tin for baking potatoes, stuffed peppers, or tomatoes; it's easier to locate & remove the tin than several items scattered on the oven racks.
- Wear an apron with large pockets when cleaning; the pockets can be used for cleaning materials or for misplaced items that are picked up to be returned to their correct location.
- Bon appétit!

Enightful People

Jackie Cabrera



Talk about turning lemons into lemonade! Jackie Cabrera, the **first totally blind student** at the Western Culinary Institute of Portland, Oregon, has graduated from the cooking school with honors. Cabrera, 35, lost her eyesight suddenly in 2001 from complications from diabetes. Rather than giving up on the things she loved, including cooking, Cabrera adapted to her loss of vision with help from the Orientation Training Center of Seattle. She was accepted to WCI's program last fall and attended the school from Jan. 7 through Oct. 15. The school assigned her a note-taker and made some other minor adaptations. Otherwise, Cabrera was just another student.

"Being their first blind student, it was very educational for the school and for me," Cabrera said. "My classmates were wonderful, very supportive. I didn't get any special treatments because I didn't want them."

Cabrera has compensated for her loss of sight by kicking her other senses, especially smell and touch, into high gear. In her own kitchen, she has ingredients organized so she can quickly find what she needs. All her spices are on a rack in alphabetical order with Braille labels. Having the memory of sight helps her visualize colors and textures as she prepares a dish, she said.

Cabrera's course of study culminated with work in the school's own restaurant, Le Cordon Bleu, in Portland. She graduated with multiple honors in October, and then worked a postgraduate internship in the kitchen at the Guide Dogs For the Blind institute in Boring, Oregon.

Cabrera hopes to open her own catering business in Lacey. When she's not cooking, she enjoys karaoke and line-dancing. Of her can-do attitude, Cabrera said, "I had a choice when I became blind. My choice was to go into depression and keep crying, or to shake my booty and get going. I decided to shake my booty."

Products

CookMagic Talking Microwave

Finally, a factory manufactured talking microwave that a visually-impaired user has declared, "It is really easy to use." A notched knob guides the user to setting the cook time and when you push a button on it, asks you to set the minutes and then the seconds. This 900-watt oven includes: easy-to-use talking programmable feature, English or Spanish language, 10 power levels, 8 instant settings for common foods, 5 memory setting buttons, time & weight defrost, remind signal, and kitchen timer. Ask us about the wide variety of other cooking accessories available for low-vision clients, including a talking kitchen scale, color-contrasting measuring spoons & cups, white/black cutting boards, knives with cutting guides, liquid level indicators, and so much more to make life easier and more self-sufficient!



Available through Enight Skills Center.

The mission of Enight Skills Center is to provide low-vision clients with the opportunity to enhance their life skills, increase their levels of confidence and independence, and enrich their lives through adaptive training and technology.

Enight Skills Center is a non-profit organization that relies on funding from grants, fundraising, and donations. These funds allow us to keep our doors open and provide the best possible care to our patients.

Please consider helping!

If you would like to make a donation, please call us at 303-757-4500. We are an IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and all donations are tax deductible.

Thank you for your support!

Please let us know if you would like to share a personal Enight Skills Center experience; we'd love to publish it in the newsletter!

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