



October 2009



Empowering Independent Living for the Visually Impaired

## Upcoming Events

### VisionWalk

Saturday, October 3 -- 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](mailto: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 4<sup>th</sup> for the first **EnSight Breakfast Fundraiser** in Denver! This unique breakfast event is designed to raise awareness and funds for EnSight 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 EnSight 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 EnSight. If you'd like to attend or volunteer to be a Table Captain, please call Liana Camacho at 303-757-4500.

# Denver Marathon and Walk-A-Mile in My Shoes Walk-a-thon

Sunday, October 18 - 7:00am

Civic Center Park, Denver



Don't miss out on the 2009 Denver Marathon - a premier marathon, half-marathon and four-person ING Marathon Relay. This world-class event continues as Colorado's largest marathon and is again expected to attract a record number of runners. The American Council of the Blind of Colorado is planning on joining in with the Denver Marathon again this year. As part of that event, ACBCO will host their Annual Walk-A-Thon in honor of White Cane Day.

In 1964, White Cane Safety Day was first observed with a Presidential Proclamation by Lyndon B. Johnson, declaring the day as a safety reminder to promote courtesy and special consideration to the blind on streets and highways. Since this first observance, White Cane Day has taken on greater meaning as a time to celebrate the independence of the blind and their right to fully participate in society. Today, all 50 states now have their own White Cane law, which not only addresses pedestrian safety for the blind but more importantly, also guarantees civil rights protections. This is a great opportunity for exposure of our blind and visually impaired individuals who have met the challenges to live successful, productive, independent lives, to call attention to their mobility and safety concerns, while interacting with the community as athletes, professionals and goal oriented citizens.

ACBCO has been one of the official charities of the Denver Marathon since its inception in 2006. The vision of the Denver Marathon is to produce an annual marathon and half marathon running event that highlights Denver, Colorado while bringing great economic and social impact to Denver and a world-class running experience to the community. The organizers are truly excited to work together with ten non-profit organizations like ACBCO to raise money for important projects! Funds raised by our participation are specifically allocated to the Community Outreach and development of a Peer-to-Peer mentoring program.

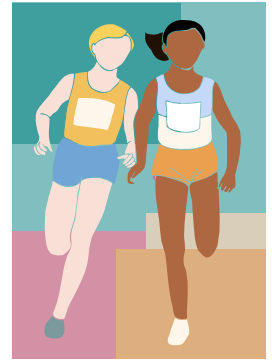
Register online for the Denver Marathon at [www.denvermarathon.com](http://www.denvermarathon.com)

For information on the ACBCO Walk-a-Thon, call their office at 303-831-0117.

## Enightful Tips

# Visually Impaired Runners

If you're a runner, or would like to be, and you're visually impaired, using a guide may be a great option. Following are a few guidelines to consider:



### Using Verbal Direction

Some runners feel they have enough vision and are in a clear enough area to run with the guide on one side, simply giving verbal instructions. In this technique, talking is crucial. The guide might have time to say "Please move to the right, because there's a stroller coming up" or may only be able to say "Move right!" The guide has to be prepared to throw conventions of polite conversation to the wind, and the runner has to be willing to obey immediately.

### Running with a Tether

A short rope, heavy string, or piece of towel, about 30 inches long, works well for giving a great deal more information to the runner. With this technique, the guide runs slightly ahead of you and to one side and each partner holds one end of the tether. The guide still gives verbal directions, but you'll be able to detect bends in the road and other slight changes in direction much more easily with the tether. If an emergency arises, the guide will give a short pull on the tether or a slight push to your arm, and you'll know immediately which way to go. Enough tension should be kept on the tether that you can feel movements without you or your guide needing to pull the slack out of the cord before you get the message. But too much pulling just wears out both people's arms.

### Choosing a Guide

What are the qualities of a good guide? First, your guide has to be safety-conscious. People who don't mind running across the street and nearly being hit by cars themselves should not be invited to take you with them. They need to allow more time and space for two bodies, so be sure your guide has good enough judgment to get both of you around obstacles safely.



If you're becoming serious about running, you'll find that the pace of your runs is important to you. You'll need a guide who is at least slightly stronger than you. Guides need to be able to talk and run at the same time, and they need to have enough energy while running to pay attention to what's going on around them. If you're running at your top speed and they're hanging on for dear life, they won't be able to tell you much about potholes and traffic.

## Setting the Pace

There is a common misconception among runners who aren't visually impaired and haven't run with a runner who is that it's the guide who sets the pace. Often, guides believe it is part of their job to set the pace. If pace matters to you, then you should be the one setting it. When a group runs together without a specific pace being determined in advance, it's usually the group that sets the pace. An individual might consciously adjust the pace of the group by running a little faster or by falling a little back, but most of the time no one really can say how the pace is being set. If you don't care about pace, you and your guide can work out the pace the same way.

## Watching the Time

Most visually impaired runners don't have watches for running. So, if time is to be kept, the guide will need to do it. Be sure the two of you know which technique you're using.

There are two ways a watch is used in training. In one, the runner wants to know the pace of the actual running. So, if the team stops for water, the runner stops his watch. The watch only tells the time you're running, not including drinking water, tying shoes, etc. This is helpful if you're trying to learn the feel of a particular pace.

In the second technique, the watch runs for the entire training run. Breaks are included in the time. This is the way time is kept in a race, and some runners prefer it because it more accurately reflects the time the workout took.

## Guidance for Your Guides

New guides are often nervous about the job. They aren't sure what to do, how hard to pull on the tether, how much to tell you, and so on. Here are some tips you can share with them that will make the job easier for them.

Be explicit. "Be careful here" doesn't convey any information. The runner is already being careful. "The ground is a little rough here" tells the runner what he or she needs to know.

Put action first, followed by background information. "We're coming up on a crowd of people standing on the path, so..." doesn't tell the runner what to do until it's too late. Instead, say "Move right, we're coming up on a crowd of people standing...."

Ask about decisions in advance. If there are two routes, mention it as soon as you know, so you won't have to stop to discuss the options. If you would like to stop for water, say so before the water stop.

When obstacles such as bumps or ruts can't be avoided, alert the runner to them verbally. Be sure to mention the direction. "Curb up" or "curb down" tells the runner whether to step high or expect a drop.

Give advance warning of turns and be sure to mention the direction. Especially in unfamiliar territory, tell your runner about the terrain. "We're coming to a long, low hill up" or "We'll be bearing to the right in a few steps" are good descriptions.

## Having Fun

Whichever guiding technique you use, and wherever you find guides, you'll have a lot of fun. You might even find you'd like to run races. Maybe you'll find yourself wearing smaller sizes!

*From an article by The American Foundation for the Blind*

## Enightful People

### Angie Matsoff



With an incredible attitude of taking life as it comes, Angie Matsoff overcame the limitations of being legally blind to become the Women's Physically Challenged Ironman Champion in Hawaii in 2001. Angie was diagnosed with juvenile macular degeneration as a freshman in college and endured vision loss to the point of being declared legally blind within one year. But this didn't stop her from being active! Because of her interest in fitness, she took up running, and when a stress fracture interfered with that, she took up swimming. It was also in college that she began biking. Her natural evolvement into a triathlete was almost inevitable...but that came later.

Angie earned her B.S. in Health & Fitness from Baylor University and continued her interests in athletics and fitness. In 1998, she completed her first triathlon, the Sprint FAU Triathlon in Boca Raton, Florida, and went on to become the Age Group Series Champion of the Gatorade Triathlon Series. It was during the Gatorade Series that she met her soon to be husband, Chuck Matsoff. It must have been love at first, because they married three months later. Their first Ironman triathlon together was the 1999 Ironman Florida, and Angie finished sixth out of eight in the W18-24 age group.

Without any central vision, Matsoff has relied on her peripheral vision to compete in more than 30 marathons and four Ironman triathlons. In case you're wondering how she manages to do a triathlon while legally blind, during the swim, Angie stays with the pack so she can keep on course. During the bike, she and Chuck ride tandem, and for the run, her peripheral vision allows her to see the edge of the pavement. There are people along the route to help keep her on track so she doesn't miss any turns. "It's an incredible experience," said Angie, "all the support and meeting new people."

Recently, the avid runner went into cardiac arrest and doctors discovered she had congestive heart failure. A year after doctors inserted a pacemaker, defibrillator and pump, the determined Angie was back on the roads, training for the ING Miami Marathon.

With a greater appreciation for life and family, the 34-year-old mother of three and personal trainer has a new approach to just about everything. She has added the words "slow down" to her vocabulary. "I really don't care about my times anymore," she said. "I don't have anything to prove. I am just glad to be out there. I am glad to be alive."

## Products

### Digital Talking Pedometer With FM Radio

This Digital Talking Pedometer announces steps, distance, time functions, plays FM radio (with five presets), measures distance, time elapsed and calories burned in a pleasant female voice. The memory captures data so results can be compared and progress checked over an entire week of activity. Target feature measures progress toward and estimates time to reach your goal. Memory stores seven days of walking data including steps, distance, and calories burned. Counts up to 99,999 steps. Digital 12 to 24-hour clock with weekday calendar and alarm. HiGlo electroluminescent backlight. Count-down and count-up timer up to 99 hours, 59 minutes, 59 seconds. Batteries, ear bud headphones and user manual included. Measures 1.75 inch H x 2 inch L x 2 inch W.



Available through Ensignt Skills Center.

## Support Groups

For a list of local support groups, please call:

American Council of the Blind of Colorado  
Sue Fenniman or George Beard  
303-831-0117

Center for People With Disabilities  
Steve Johnson  
303-442-8662



The mission of EnSight 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.

EnSight 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 EnSight Skills Center experience; we'd love to publish it in the newsletter!***

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