



## THE *Heart* OF THE TRIANGLE

Sharing the vision and supporting the mission of the Triangle area non-profit community.

# Support for Visually Impaired Children

by Judy Liu, MPH

**W**hen a child's physical senses such as sight, hearing or speech are limited or impaired, he or she may be faced with lifelong challenges. Early and ongoing active intervention is vital to ensure that the child learns skills that will enable him or her to become a productive, independent adult. The Bryce Martin Foundation was created two years ago when Bryce, at the age of four months, was diagnosed with a rare congenital disorder called Optic Nerve Hypoplasia (ONH) that greatly limits his vision. Bryce's family created the foundation to help support North Carolina children with visual impairments/blindness and their families.

The Bryce Martin Foundation provides services to approximately twenty children and their families each week. Some children attend the Exploration Learning Center. Others may attend the twice weekly gymnastics classes tailored to visually impaired children at Gymcarolina Gymnastics Academy. Therapists also bring the children to be assessed in new environments. In addition, the Governor Morehead School for the Blind does regular field trips with their children.

The Foundation provides free eye screening at its annual festival. In

### UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Please volunteer, donate and attend the upcoming Foundation Activities:

**Bryce Martin Gymnastics Tot Class**  
Wednesdays at 10:30am and 3:15pm  
Gymcarolina Gymnastics  
9321 Leesville Road, Raleigh  
(919) 848-7988

**Exploration Learning Center**  
Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays  
from 9am-noon  
9308 Fairbanks Drive, Raleigh

**2017 Kids Helping Kids Festival**  
May 7, 2017, starting at 11am  
Laurel Hills Community Center  
3808 Edwards Mill Road, Raleigh

addition, they have provided funds for eyeglasses and braille tools for dozens of families. Thousands of sighted and visually impaired families have benefited from their offerings. They bring sighted children in contact with visually impaired children so the children can stimulate and learn from each other. For example, in one exercise both sighted and visually impaired children will try to identify herbs by smell. In another, all

of the children play "goal ball," a game where the ball has a bell inside it.

The long-term goal is to continue funding and expanding the Exploration Learning Center to operate five days a week to meet the growing demand. They also plan to offer themed summer camps in subjects including Braille, cooking, water play, art and physical education. All of the offerings are free to the students.

The Exploration Learning Center accepts students starting at the age of two years. The family of one young visually impaired boy who joined the program about a year ago was told that he would never be able to walk. With his family's support, healthcare services, and services offered by the Foundation, he began standing up and trying to jump to the songs the children were singing. He can now run and play with the other children.

The foundation staff works tirelessly to educate the community, to raise funds for glasses, therapy equipment and braille learning tools, and to fund the Exploration Learning Center so that it can continue to offer therapy classes and pre-school and summer camps to children with visual impairments.

For information, visit [www.brycemartinfoundation.org](http://www.brycemartinfoundation.org)

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