



BEST NEWS

Blind Early Services TN - Newsletter for Caregivers and Providers



BEST AWARDED PREDATORS FOUNDATION HELPER GRANT FOR SECOND YEAR

Through an annual grant cycle, the Nashville Predators Foundation empowered by SmileDirectClub gives out hundreds of thousands of dollars to local charities for projects and programs benefiting youth and their families in Nashville and Middle Tennessee. This year, the Foundation awarded \$800,049 - the largest one time allocation in team history. Blind Early Services TN (BEST) is thrilled to be a recipient for the second year in a row. On May 17th, BEST co-founders, Alison Clougherty and Stacy Cornwall, along with Fundraising and Donor Engagement Manager, Anne Farhangi, were on hand at Bridgestone Arena to accept an \$8,000 grant to support our annual community event centered around blindness awareness and accessibility. White Cane Wonderland features immersive and educational experiences that bring members of the community together for an inclusive, fun-filled event meant to spread awareness and demystify what it means to be blind. This year's event will take place on December 8th and 9th at the Nashville Public Library downtown. On behalf of the entire team at BEST, we say thank you to the amazing work the Predators Foundation is doing and for recognizing us again this year!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

BEST TOGETHER PODCAST
DR. CATHY SMYTH NOW AVAILABLE

JUNE 7
6:30PM-7:30PM CT
PARENT CONNECT VIRTUAL SUPPORT GROUP MONTHLY MEETING

JUNE 8
12:00PM CT
ASK THE TVI: FINDING THE RIGHT SCHOOL

JUNE 26
5:30PM CT
VEI LOW VISION SUPPORT GROUP VIRTUAL MEETING

Don't Miss Dr. Cathy Smyth on the Next Episode of the BEST Together Podcast

Dr. Catherine Smyth has more than 30 years of experience in the field of early intervention and preschool education for children with vision impairments. She is now the Director of Research at Anchor Center For Blind Children, a private, non-profit agency serving young children with visual impairments. Anchor provides exceptional, high-quality early intervention; special education; developmental assessment and therapy (occupational, speech-language among others); and supportive family engagement and coaching for blind children during their most formative years of development: birth to age five. As the director of research, Dr. Smyth has worked on studies around such important topics as mealtime routines in early intervention for infants and toddlers with visual impairment, concept and tactile development for preschoolers, and newborn visual screening. Her most recent project has been a collaboration with the Rocky Mountain Hospital for Children's NICU and Dr. Robert King of Children's Eye Physicians on the NAVEG Project which seeks to establish a reliable, evidence-based Cortical/Cerebral Vision Impairment (CVI) screening protocol for newborns and infants. Dr. Smyth also prepares graduate students in online classes at Lindenwood University and the University of Utah. In this episode we discuss how Dr. Smyth ended up in the field of vision impairment, what her various roles in the field have been and taught her, all about Anchor Center and what she's excited to be working on now. Listen now where podcasts are streamed!



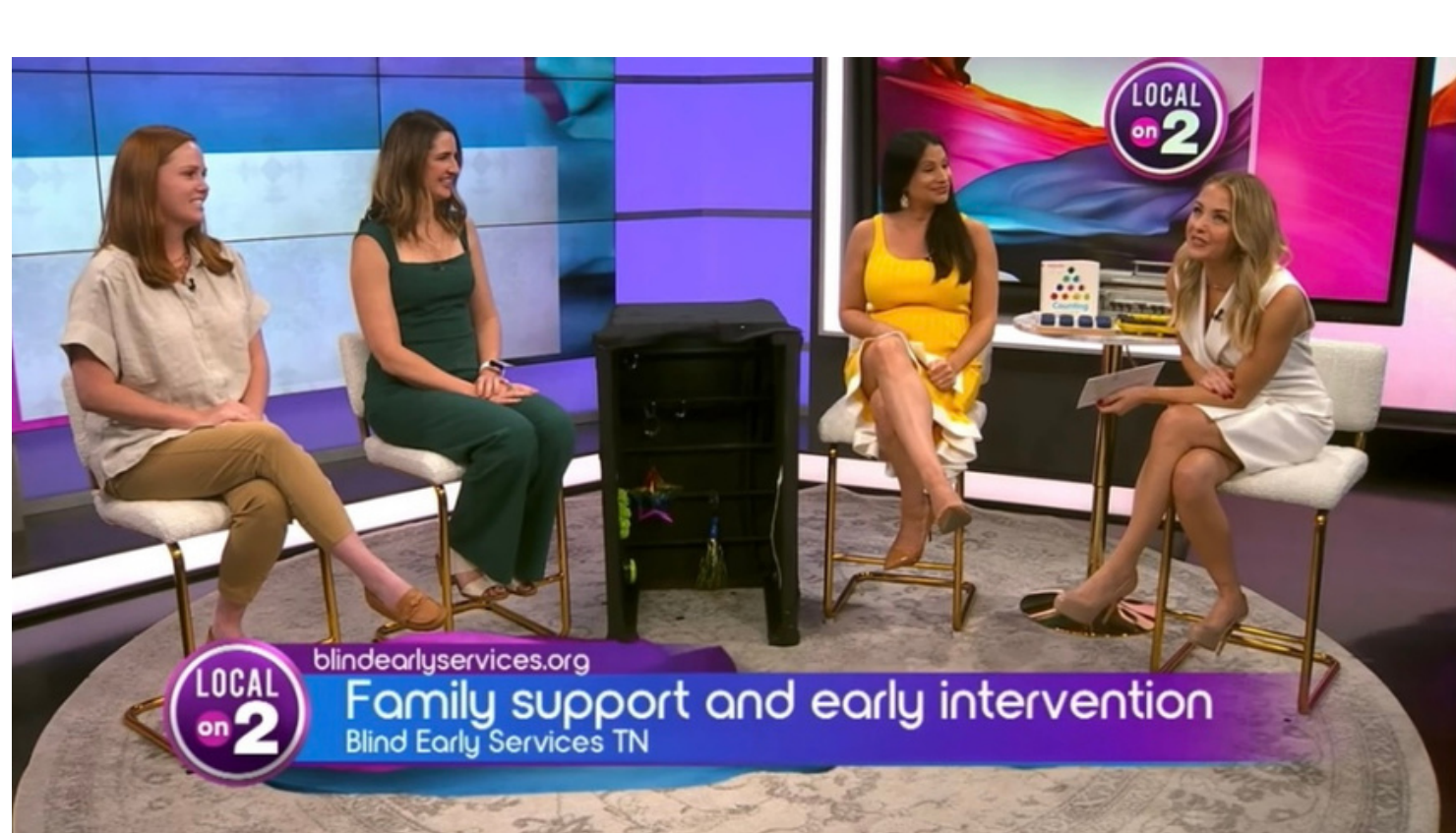
Staff Spotlight: Anne Farhangi

Anne Farhangi is a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) whose experience includes providing mental health therapy to children and families in Tennessee. She has been involved with many nonprofit organizations through volunteer efforts, and is passionate about advocacy for children's early developmental needs. Anne received her Bachelor's degree in Social Work at the University of Tennessee, and received her Master's Degree in Clinical Social Work at The University of Chicago. Anne has volunteered for BEST since 2020, and officially joined the BEST team in March as our Donor Engagement & Development Manager. In her new role, Anne will be spearheading fundraising efforts, special events, and donor relations. We are thrilled to welcome her aboard!



BEST Co-Founders Featured on Local On 2

BEST was honored to be asked to join Local On 2 co-hosts and producers, Larissa Wohl and Laura Schweizer for a recent sit-down interview that aired live for Nashville and middle Tennessee residents on May 24th. The segment is now streaming everywhere on YouTube. Local On 2 is a daily news show that highlights local businesses, community events, shopping, dining and various newsworthy things going on in and around Nashville. BEST jumped at the chance to draw attention to our mission and explain for viewers the importance of individualized early intervention services and family support. If you missed our TV debut, be sure to view it at the link below!



Podcast for Parents and Providers of Children with CVI



Jessica Marquardt is a parent advocate for children with Cortical/Cerebral Visual Impairment, or CVI, for the Perkins School for the Blind. She is also the parent of a daughter who has CVI. For several years, Jessica hosted and produced Kaleidoscope, a podcast sharing stories of families impacted by CVI. We recently came across the podcast, and although not currently publishing new episodes, the episodes available offer great content for parents and providers of children who have been diagnosed with or have suspected CVI.

The description of the Podcast from Apple Podcasts reads: "Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) is the leading cause of pediatric visual impairment in the developed world. The eyes can see, but the brain can't interpret the visual world. Due to neuroplasticity, the functional vision of a child with CVI can improve. The number of children with CVI is growing, so why isn't anyone talking about this public health crisis? We are."

Check out all 17 episodes of Kaleidoscope now at the link below.

WHAT WE'RE LOVING THIS MONTH!



These light up batons can be found at Target, Dollar Tree, Five Below and Michael's among other retailers. Available in several colors and patterns, these are especially good for children with CVI who may prefer lights and certain colors. The spiky balls on the end are great for tactile exploration while the baton handle helps support grasping and visually-guided reach.