



2003: Opening a New Way

CLIMBING HIGHER, FLYING FARTHER

Senior Instructor Daniel Kish and Instructional Coach Hector Elias, both blind, show 24 blind students from 6 to 16 years of age a new way to live and thrive with blindness. They began the 2½ day program at Camp Tuhsmeheeta in Michigan with an informal evening presentation to parents and children about "Seeing without Sight", and "Living without Limits."

In the days that followed, the "Seeing without Sight" portion of the program focused on teaching the blind students to "see" with FlashSonar. Using this powerful technique, students learned to find buildings and openings to buildings from over 20 feet away, find trees scattered throughout a large grove, travel comfortably through unknown spaces, such as a supermarket without



A student travels towards a tree that she detected from approximately 15 feet (5 m).

guidance or need to touch anything. They even recognize and identify objects, such as trees, pole, parked cars, and bushes without touching them - just by quietly clicking their tongues and understanding the patterns of reflected sound.



Students learn to use street signs and other objects that are easily detected using FlashSonar to help them maintain their orientation while traveling.

The "Living without Limits" portion provided a practical application for FlashSonar and positive attitude building by involving the students in challenging athletic activities such as soccer and dodge ball, laser tag and swashbuckling, orienteering and tree climbing. At one point, 7 boys and girls, some of whom had sworn they "would never climb a tree!" sat

excitedly together 20 feet above the ground in the boughs of a tall pine. An audification technique together with a sports skills curriculum developed by World Access for the Blind facilitated effective and exciting sports play. The balls and swords, for instance, were covered in plastic bags so that they made enough noise for the blind students to interact with them. **"Those guys are monsters!"** panted a bedraggled Hector upon returning late for dinner from a grueling outing with his hardball group of blind teenagers. As the swords and balls flew, so did the spirits of the students, and the expectations and dreams of their parents.



Learning to climb trees is fun, athletic and gives students a chance to try out their new "senses".



Blind students take the lead in a trip to the supermarket to buy groceries for the camp.

"Thank you! Thank you! for doing this weekend," wrote a parent. "It went well from all fronts - kids, parents and sibs. Please thank Hector; he did a great job. Many of the kids have commented on how much they enjoyed the training. Hope we can do it again."