

The Crowd: Jeremy Poincenot, the World Blind Golf Champion, speaks at Beyond Blindness event



Jeremy Poincenot and his father, Lionel Poincenot, who serves as his caddy during major tournaments, smile before the crowd at the Beyond Blindness event. (Courtesy of Kitchen Table Marketing)

By B.W. Cook

April 25, 2024 12:56 PM PT

If you need some inspiration to restore a degree of hope for humanity bombarded with news of seemingly unsolvable conflict, read on.

Did you know that among us is a very unique champion golfer? His name is **Jeremy Poincenot**, and he is blind.

Poincenot, the “World Blind Golf Champion,” recently addressed an important gathering of an organization known as Beyond Blindness at its annual fundraising event held at Mile Square Golf Course in Fountain Valley.

About 200 guests from all over Orange County came together for the event, raising more than \$240,000 in support of children and families dealing with vision impairment. Poincenot raised the bar on the “hope” element of the midweek affair at least 10 times as the keynote speaker.

VIP attendees had a chance to meet one-on-one with Poincenot out on the driving range, where he and his father and caddy, Lionel Poincenot, provided demonstrations and pointers. The three-time World Championship golfer also treated guests to personal stories of his triumphs and the challenges he faced since losing his sight at age 19.

“Vision Beyond Sight supports our continuous evolution as we deliver life-changing, inclusive programming that paves the way for children with visual impairments and other disabilities to achieve their full potential,” said **Angie Rowe**, president and chief executive of Beyond Blindness. “It was an honor and a privilege to have an incredible community of supporters, families, sponsors and members of our Board of Directors and Ophthalmic Advisory Board join us for this impactful evening.”

Beyond Blindness advocate **Barbara Alvarado** received the Dr. Wilhelm de Nijs Vision Award, named for the organization’s founder, who dedicated his life to helping others navigate a world without vision after being blinded in the war against Indonesian Communists. Longtime supporter Alvarado was honored for her dedication to Beyond Blindness for more than 20 years.

“Following dinner and a Q&A with Poincenot, Beyond Blindness alumna **Lucie Courtois**, a Newport Beach resident, took the stage sharing yet another inspiring moment,” the organization’s spokesperson, Carrie William Freitas, reported. “Born blind, Courtois spoke about how Beyond Blindness has supported her journey since birth, which includes more than 20 eye surgeries, the publication of her first fictional children’s book and enrollment in script writing classes at Orange Coast College.”



Speaker Lucie Courtois and her mother, Beyond Blindness Board President Carol Trapani. (Courtesy of Kitchen Table Marketing)

On stage, Courtois noted to those gathered that in most spaces it's not common to see a number of people with disabilities thriving. Her hope, she said, is to change that.

"I want to tell stories that people can identify with and have recently written three spec scripts to submit to Nickelodeon. The services I have received from Beyond Blindness have allowed me to pursue this career," Courtois said. "Beyond Blindness has changed my life in so many ways and given me the courage and skills to live to my fullest potential."

Funds raised at the gala directly support nearly 500 children and more than 800 family members each year through innovative programming and services, including two new inclusive preschool classrooms and a recently expanded Low Vision Optometry Clinic.

The 2024 Vision Beyond Sight Gala was hosted with the support of generous sponsors, including STAAR Surgical (Funding the Future Sponsor); PNC Bank (Visionary Sponsor); Capital Group, Michelle Dean and Wells Fargo Advisors (Changemaker Sponsor); and Enterprise Bank and Trust, Glaukos Charitable Foundation, OSRX Pharmaceuticals, Tarsus Pharmaceuticals, and Wright, Ford, Young and Co. (Uplifter Sponsors).

"The remarkable generosity of our sponsors makes it possible for us to help bridge the gap and ensure every Orange County child with visual impairments and other disabilities is supported throughout their lifetime," Rowe says. "We are thankful for the continued support that makes the journey for every family who comes through our doors full of hope and inspiration."

OPINION

NEWPORT BEACH

COSTA MESA

FOUNTAIN VALLEY



B.W. Cook

B.W. Cook is editor of the Bay Window, the official publication of the Balboa Bay Club in Newport Beach.