

## Advocate hosts show about blindness, cooking

**DEBORAH CIRCELLI - STAFF WRITER**

February 20, 2010; Page 01C

DAYTONA BEACH -- DAYTONA BEACH - A local advocate is making her national television debut on a new show that helps people who are blind or visually impaired with cooking tips.

Sabrina Deaton, 35, of South Daytona co-hosts a couple of segments this coming week with a South Florida doctor discussing medical breakthroughs and research dealing with macular degeneration.

"Cooking Without Looking" will appear Monday through Thursday at 6 a.m. on **the** Fine Living Network, which is on Bright House Network's digital cable channel 180.

Deaton, president of **the** Daytona Beach Chapter of **the** National Federation of **the** Blind of Florida, has been participating in some shows as a co-host throughout last year in South Florida, where **the** show has aired on and off **for** about five years on a PBS channel.

Deaton, who is visually impaired, first appeared as a guest in 2007 when she brought **the** show, which is generally filmed in Boynton Beach, to Daytona Beach to film at **the Center for the Visually Impaired**. She did an episode where she cooked with her son, who is now 8.

Deaton at **the** time was director of **the** National Federation of **the** Blind Newsline service where people can hear newspaper articles read over **the** phone.

**The** cooking show uses guest chefs who are blind or visually impaired. They provide recipes and directions on how to have fun and stay safe in **the** kitchen.

Renee Rentmeester, creator and executive producer of **the** show, said Deaton brings a lot to **the** show because she is young, which challenges stereotypes that people only go blind when they are older.

Plus, she said, Deaton has experience with and knowledge about macular degeneration.

"**For** so many years, it's sort of been kept a secret almost like a little closed society, but any of us can go blind at any time," Rentmeester said.

"This show is about showing not **the** disability but **the** ability of people with disabilities."

Deaton was 25 when she was diagnosed with Stargardt's Disease, a form of macular degeneration that caused her to lose her central vision but not her peripheral vision.

She was 23 when she started noticing vision problems while working at a newspaper in Ohio and afterward she was not able to pass a driver's license renewal test.

What's important about **the** cooking show, she said, is it appeals to all audiences. But **for the** blind, she said it's "a form of them getting back their independence."

**The** show helps them get in **the** kitchen despite their condition by teaching various techniques.

**The** show describes everything that is going on, she said, **for** people who are unable to see

"It's very exciting," Deaton said. "This is something that combines two of my passions - cooking and blindness advocacy."

She plans to go to South Florida next month to film her cooking segment about making a type of bean soup. She developed it after raiding her pantry one day. She's not able to drive and it was cold outside; she couldn't get to a grocery store, so she went into her pantry.

"I'm thinking of doing that and talking about how important it is to have a well-stocked pantry," she said.

**The** show can also be seen at [visionworldfoundation.net](http://visionworldfoundation.net) , which is **the** parent company of **the** show, and on **the** "Cooking Without Looking" Facebook site.

**Cutline:** Photo 1: "Cooking Without Looking" is **the** first TV show produced especially **for** blind and visually impaired people.

Fine Living Network

Photo 2: Sabrina Deaton, left, of South Daytona and Dr. Marc Gannon of South Florida co-host segments of a new television show about "Cooking Without Looking" **for** people who are blind or visually impaired. Deaton is a longtime advocate **for** visually impaired people.

Fine Living Network