

Daytona Beach center offers treat for visually impaired

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DAYTONA BEACH — **Visually** impaired children will get to have **the** experiences their fully sighted peers often take **for** granted thanks to a special program **for** them offered Sunday afternoon by **the Center for the Visually Impaired**.

Tre Burgos, 8, of Port Orange squealed with joy as he greeted a pot-bellied pig that was part of **the** petting zoo at **the** nonprofit agency on Dunn Avenue as part of an orientation **for the** summer program.

“I’ll call him muddy,” Tre said as **the** pint-sized pig rooted **the** ground near his feet.

Tre’s mother, Abby, watched her son beam and called **the** program “wonderful.”

“He’s made a lot of good friends,” she said. “It’s great **for the** kids, because they get to do new things that might be challenging **for** them.”

Devon Edwards, 12, of Daytona Beach also fancied **the** pig.

“I like **the** noises he makes,” Devon said.

This is **the** second summer Devon has participated in **the** program that offers children **the** opportunity to do things like kayak and sit inside **the** cockpit of a plane. They also took a trip to a bike shop last year and got hands-on experience fixing a flat tire. He said he hopes they get to sail this year, as **the** trip last year was called **for** rain.

“I want to sail,” Devon said.

He’s a wiz on **the** computer, having mastered a program called JAWS that reads **the** computer screen **for** him.

“I want to be a radio DJ (disc jockey),” Devon said. “I like country music. Toby Keith is my favorite.”

Program supervisor Julienne Messmer encourages **the** children she works with to be career-minded.

“**The** idea is to have as many experiences as possible,” she said. “I want them to think about careers. A lot of them can’t see what people are doing so I ask them what they think about **the** job. I ask them, ‘Could you do it?’ ”

Nick McNeil took classes in **the** “transition program” at **the Center for the Visually Impaired** when he was in his junior and senior years of high school.

The 24-year-old is now entering his senior year at **the** University of Central Florida and has nearly earned his degree in photography.

He was taking video footage of Sunday’s event.

“It’s exciting to see **the** work that is being produced by those with limited sight,” he said.

“Opportunity is everywhere. With **the** right resources, you can do so much.”

The center’s president, Ronee Silverman, said McNeil knows **the** most important message **the Center for the Visually Impaired** shares.

“You may have limited sight, but you have unlimited possibilities,” she said.

Cutline: News-Journal/JULIE MURPHY Devon Edwards, 12, of Daytona Beach, and another boy pet a rooster Sunday at **the Center for the Visually Impaired**.

