The eyes of the heart: What lies beyond darkness?

By Camelia Negoita
OF THE IN MOTION STAFF

Sometimes, in the crazy mainstream of life, we may forget how gifted and lucky we are, and when faced with the thought of being deprived of one of our senses, we stop and appreciate our good fortunes.

For David Bruzos and Amber Wardell, life is a series of challenges. Everyday there are barriers to overcome and difficulties to face. Amber and David possess a fierce determination to succeed in whatever they do.

In spite of their blindness, David and Amber are exceptional students, with grade point averages that make many sighted students envious. Recently, these two outstanding DBCC students were selected as scholarship recipients from the National Federation of the Blind of Florida (NFBF), one of the most competitive and prestigious awards of its kind. The competition was truly fierce. The scholarship criteria included GPA, volunteer services, hobbies, goals, essays, and references. DBCC is indeed fortunate to have two of its students selected as scholarship winners.

I have seen Amber and David many times on campus and I've always wanted to understand their life without sight. No doubt, many of you have often wondered what it would be like not being able to see the colors of the rainbow, the sunshine, or the magnificence of the sky. You have probably also wondered how you would get around campus, do your homework and generally accomplish the various tasks of everyday living without the use of your eyes. Now you have the opportunity to briefly enter their world, to see through their heart and soul what it is like to be blind. Although Amber and David lost their vision several years ago, people need to understand that their real problem is not the lack of sight but the misunderstandings about blindness on the part of their fellow students and instructors.

Although David and Amber obviously manage the challenges of college as well, if not better, than other students, people tend to treat them differently. "They feel sorry for me, and I don't know why," Amber said. "Socially, not too many people talk to me, maybe because they think I'm weird or something," she added.

About the feelings of discomfort on the part of many sighted people when they meet a blind person, Davis said, "I think a lot of the uneasiness has to do with a sense of awkwardness and even fear because they can't imagine how they would carry out everyday activities if they were unable to see." She further said, "We know that blindness is feared second only to cancer. Sighted people know objectively that blindness is not contagious but they can't imagine life without sight."

For David Bruzos, the reaction from sighted people is pretty normal. He thinks it's simply human nature for them to feel uncomfortable. If someone looks or acts differently, this shouldn't mean they are weird or abnormal. A sighted person himself until the age of 12, David experienced both worlds and he fully understands that for many sighted individuals, it is hard to approach somebody who is blind because the first thing that crosses their mind is "Gosh, I can't make eye contact with this person. People automatically assume that we can't possibly know how to go out and really have fun just like they do," David said.

"We are fully capable of having just as much fun as anyone else. There is nothing wrong with our brain and there is nothing wrong with our other senses. The only difference is that our eyes don't work as well..."