

Teachers

SEARCH

TEACHING RESOURCES

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

BOOKS & AUTHORS

CONNECT

All Results



Rocco Fiorentino (left) and Kid Reporter Danielle Azzolina (right) at the New Jersey State Library Talking Book and Braille Center in Trenton, New Jersey. (Photo Courtesy Danielle Azzolina)

In Helen Keller's Footsteps
Young Rocco Fiorentino's life inspired by Keller legacy

By Danielle Azzolina | October 29 , 2009

PRINT EMAIL



SOURCE
Scholastic Kids Press Corps
The Scholastic Kids Press Corps is a team of about 50 Kid Reporters around the nation. The interactive site brings daily news to life with reporting for kids, by kids.

Subscribe to Scholastic News
Order Online
Get More Information



Rocco Fiorentino giving a speech to legislators about Braille Literacy. (Credit: Courtesy Little Rock Foundation)

One person whose life has been touched by Helen Keller's story is 12-year-old Rocco Fiorentino. Rocco has been blind since birth. Like Helen Keller, Rocco has overcome this obstacle and is living a full, exciting, and purposeful life.

Also like Helen, Rocco is an ambassador for the blind by way of his very own foundation, The Little Rock Foundation. In October of 2008 Rocco received The Helen Keller Foundation Award for his work and advocacy for the blind.

"Helen Keller has opened many doors for the blind community in today's society," Roco said. "I have followed in her footsteps and continue to lobby for the rights of individuals without sight."

Last year, Rocco petitioned state legislators in New Jersey to recognize October as Blindness Awareness Month. The bill passed the Assembly and the Senate unanimously. Governor Jon Corzine signed the bill into law last December. Such recognition helps people become more aware of the plights and abilities of seeing-impaired people.

"Getting the bill passed was easy," he said. "The hard work is ahead. There are many concerns to address, but I think that we have to change the way sighted people think of people who are blind or visually impaired."

His goal is to help people look beyond the blindness to see the real person.

RELATED PRODUCTS

Teacher Store
Let's Find Out™ Early Learning Books: The Five Senses/Opposites and Position Words
Grades Pre-K-K \$50.40

ADD TO CART

Teacher Store
Brian's Winter
Grades 6-12 \$5.95

ADD TO CART

"I want to bring awareness across the country and help the 180 million people who don't see the world the same way you do," he said.

His other goals are in music.

"I would love to perform on stage at Carnegie Hall and perform for a large audience," he said. "Someday, I will be on tour and travel around the country."

Rocco has been performing since he was a young boy.

"I'm very comfortable on the stage talking to people," he said. "I really don't know how big my audience is, so I have always found it easy to be the spokesperson for the foundation I run with my parents. People tell me that because I speak out for all people who are blind, that I am a positive role model for kids and adults."

He is confident that he can do anything he wants, which helps make that possible.

"I think positively about facing challenges in life, and I guess that's because I've always been blind," he said. "People see me or hear me sing, play piano, drums, and saxophone and think it's cool that a blind person is so musical. To me music is what I feel, not what I see."

His parents, Tina and Rocco Fiorentino, started The Little Rock Foundation when Rocco was born. They couldn't find any help on how to raise a blind or visually impaired child. The foundation now provides that service.

The Little Rock Foundation is a not-for-profit organization run solely by volunteers. Its goal is to reach out to the community and make a difference in the lives of blind and visually impaired children.

The foundation provides two family resource centers in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (one at Wills Eye Hospital and the other at Children's Hospital); a day camp in Medford, New Jersey; and scholarships, advice, and support for the visually impaired and their families.

"I have been an advocate for the blind and visually impaired since I was 5 years old," Rocco said. "I have many goals, which I would like to achieve in my lifetime."

For more information on how Rocco is doing just that, visit the foundation website at <http://www.tlrf.org>.

Other Stories in this series:

- [Helen Keller's Legacy](#): Keller Johnson-Thompson discusses the life and contributions of her Great Grand Aunt Helen Keller
- [Ambassadors for Helen Keller](#): Kid Reporter Danielle Azzolina explores life for the blind from her best friend to Helen Keller to a library for the blind in New Jersey.

About the Author

Danielle Azzolina is a member of the Scholastic Kids Press Corps.

RELATED ARTICLES



[Helen Keller's Legacy](#)
Helen Keller's great-grand niece, Keller Johnson-Thompson sat down with Kid Reporter Danielle Azzolina recently to share some insight into her famous relative's life.

[Help Students Settle Into Your Classroom](#)
Ideas and getting-to-know-you activities for making students feel welcome and comfortable in their new learning environment.

[Playing to Learn: High-Level, Language Building Play](#)
High-level, language-building play for your little one. Discusses how different types of play affect your child's social, emotional, and cognitive growth.