



Who: Rocco Fiorentino, 12
What: **Hands On! Books for Blind Children Award** Presentation at the National Braille Press Gala event, featuring Howie Mandel.
When: October 16, 2009, 7 pm
Where: Renaissance Waterfront Hotel, Boston
Contact: Kimberley Ballard, Director of National Marketing
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For Rocco – Sharla Feldscher, 215-285-4868 (cell), sharla@sf-pr.com

Rocco Fiorentino will be receiving the Hands On! Books for Blind Children Award at the National Braille Press gala, “A Million Laughs for Literacy”, to benefit literacy for blind children.

ABOUT THE HANDS ON! AWARD:

Given annually by National Braille Press, this award honors an individual who has promoted braille literacy through their words and actions. This award was established in 2005 to build awareness and help reverse the dismal 10% braille literacy rate among blind children today. Prior recipients include First Lady Laura Bush and Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling.

ABOUT AWARD-WINNER ROCCO FIORENTINO:

- 12 year old braille reader from Voorhees, New Jersey.
- Rocco was born four months premature and weighing only 1 ½ pounds. He had a 3% chance to survive and because they needed 100% oxygen in his incubator, he lost his sight. He is totally blind.
- Rocco is an accomplished jazz musician, humanitarian, and ambassador of The Little Rock Foundation, named for him, a non-profit formed by his parents to support the needs of families of blind and visually impaired children.
- As the Ambassador of the Little Rock Foundation, Rocco has accomplished the following:
 - Influenced the New Jersey state legislators to dedicate \$1.2 M to braille education and services for the blind.
 - Saved jobs of 50 employees of the NJ Commission of the Blind and Visually Impaired after protesting proposed budget cuts.
 - Inspired two month-long awareness campaigns in NJ and PA, proclaiming this month, October 2009, as Blindness Awareness Month with over 60 organizations planning awareness events and special programs.
 - Spoken to thousands of students and senior citizens in educational programs building understanding about the life of a blind person.
- Rocco is a jazz singer, pianist, drummer, plays saxophone and he writes music.

APPEARANCES:

- The Today Show, NBC.
- FOX-TV, reporter for the Philadelphia affiliate at the American Idol Finals in Hollywood, 2008.
- Birdland Jazz Club, New York City.
- Sesame Street appearance to air January 21, 2010 demonstrating that being blind is just another way of living and singing a jazz song with all the characters.
- Palm Springs, CA – “One Night Only” musical benefit show joining Rita Moreno, Freda Payne, Sally Kellerman and many other stars.
- Rocco has performed all over the country from Hawaii to Florida, NY and Arizona

AWARDS AND HONORS:

- Kohl’s Kids Who Care Award
- Volvo for Life Award, finalist
- Build-A-Bear Huggable Hero, one in 12 heroes throughout the world.
- Helen Keller Award by Visually Impaired & Blind Services in Berks County, PA.
- Great Friend to Kids Award by the Please Touch Museum in Philadelphia.
- March of Dimes spokesperson, 2009.
- Philadelphia 76ers Hometown Hero
- Liberty Freedom Award from Camden County, NJ

ABOUT NATIONAL BRAILLE PRESS:

National Braille Press is a not-for-profit organization that helps spark and support a lifetime of opportunity for blind children through braille literacy and provides access to information that empowers blind people to actively engage in work, family, and community affairs. NBP’s new Center for Braille Innovation is exploring the best technology and training solutions to get more braille under more blind people's fingertips.

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