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Anchors Aweigh

Phoenix CPA Sets Sail
With 12 Blind Students

The Future of Finance

Embracing Change in the
Workplace



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“As the kids got familiar with the boats, it was fun to watch their confidence levels change dramatically,”

Anchors Aweigh!

Phoenix CPA Sets Sail with 12 Blind Students

Steve Pope, a CPA with Henry+Horne, learned a lot about sailing, the challenges of blindness and ultimately, the meaning of trust when he served as a sighted guide to help 12 students with the Foundation for Blind Children circumnavigate three catamarans in the Spanish Virgin Islands.

The group, known as “The Blind Buccaneers,” crewed the boats for six days, setting sail from San Juan, Puerto Rico on November 10. Leading up to the trip, the volunteer chaperones and students learned the fundamentals of sailing including how to identify cardinal directions, tie appropriate knots and adjust the sails. During the trip, the students controlled the boats from start to finish and also rationed and prepared the meals.

“As the kids got familiar with the boats, it was fun to watch their confidence levels change dramatically,” said Pope.

The group swam with sea turtles, fed sharks and fished. They encountered some rough waters and had to change course a couple of times thanks to tropical weather, but it was a life-changing experience for everyone involved.



“You really learn the meaning of trust when you put a blind 15-year-old in the water for the first time and tell them to let go of the wall.”



“Our trip was absolutely incredible, and I’m truly amazed at what our kids have been able to do,” said Pope, who serves as president of the board for the Foundation for Blind Children. The group consisted of 12 adults and 12 youths ranging in age from 14 to 21 years old. Preparation for the trip included training at Lake Pleasant for about 10 weeks prior and also a race with the Arizona Yacht Club.

“Many of the students did not even know how to swim,” said Pope. “You really learn the meaning of trust when you put a blind 15-year-old in the water for the first time and tell them to let go of the wall.”

Pope said the main challenges of the trip, besides making sure no one went overboard, were that of seasickness and bad weather. “But one of the best parts of the trip was getting to know the kids and hearing their stories.”

“The goal with these big trips is to get the kids outside of their comfort zone,” says Pope. “We do big bucket-list challenges — challenges that would be difficult for even full-sighted individuals.” In past challenges, the group has climbed Kilimanjaro and has even swum Alcatraz.

Pope has been involved with the Foundation for Blind Children for the past four years after a colleague recommended the opportunity to him. The Foundation’s mission is to “teach the world that vision loss is a diagnosis, not a disability.” The Foundation runs two schools and also provides services for adults.

Pope, a senior manager whose work focuses on technology, emerging companies and commercial audit engagements, says he loves his work as a CPA. He is married with three young children. ■ — *Patty Gannon*