Vision
ISSUE 1 ■ VOLUME 5 ■ FALL 2014

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A TASTE OF THE SHADOWS CELEBRATES BLINDNESS AWARENESS

Friends of the Center for Vision Loss gathered at the Green Pond Country Club, Bethlehem, PA on Tuesday, October 14, 2014, to celebrate blindness awareness at the agency’s unique A Taste of the Shadows dinner. Guests first enjoyed a reception featuring hors d’oeuvres and a wine-tasting by Franklin Hill Vineyards accompanied by Celtic harp music skillfully played by Maddie Link, a high school junior who is visually impaired.

The agency’s sighted guides then gathered the guests into their table seating groups to share information about the dinner portion of the event. All were asked to don blindfolds to simulate loss of vision. Then each guide led their table into the dining room in conga line fashion and individually seated their guests. They explained how the table was set and provided tips on how a person with a visual impairment finds their plates, utensils, water glass, coffee cup and more. A four course meal was then served. The room resounded with chatter and laughter as the guests were challenged to perform this everyday task without the benefit of their vision.

Following dinner, Executive Director Douglas Yingling noted that loss of vision is challenging at any age because it impacts an individual’s quality of life and independence. He thanked the guests for giving up their sight while they dined to experience for a short time how challenging vision loss can be and indicated that he hoped they would leave the event with a new perspective.

Doug invited Brian Drake, Green Pond’s Banquet and Catering Manager, to talk about the evening’s menu. Brian noted that all the food was prepared to offer the best taste experience using many ingredients vital for good eye health such as omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins A, C and E and lutein, lycopene and zeaxanthin.

Doug then thanked Todd Donnelly, owner of viamedia, the event’s Independence Presentation Sponsor, and Laurie Hackett of Air Products, the Blindness Awareness Dinner and Program Book Sponsor. They noted the valuable programs and services that the Center for Vision Loss provides everyday for people who are blind or visually impaired. Other event sponsors included: Minuteman Press of the Lehigh Valley; Fox Optical & Gallery, LLC; TD Bank; Advanced Family Eye Care; Buckno, Lisicky &

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Rita Lang, the Center for Vision Loss’s Manager of Innovative Programming and Volunteer Coordinator, who is visually impaired, invited the guests to comment on their experiences. Comments ranged from “I felt very uncomfortable at first but now realize what a person with vision loss goes through every day” to “Now I better appreciate the work of the Center for Vision Loss in helping people with vision loss improve their independence in performing daily tasks.”

Sighted guides included Dawn Sellers, Lynn Schavionne, Sandy Gallagher, Cheryl Petrokovich, Alyssa Johnson, Sarah Swartz, Jeanette Bateman, Pete Oswald, Donna DiMenichi, Amy Crowe and Sarah Morse.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR…

Collaboration is an important word in our nonprofit world. While collaborations have been promoted, encouraged and persuaded, I know that they can also be a challenge to accomplish successfully.

When we had the opportunity to partner with the nonprofit Macula Vision Research Foundation (MVRF), it seemed like an ideal fit for a collaboration. The MVRF supports research related to macular degeneration and the vision loss it creates. They offer SupportSight Seminars nationwide and we pursued the opportunity to have them put the Lehigh Valley on their schedule. The event was held at DeSales University on September 26, 2014.

Each of the presenters provided a different perspective on this eye disease, the leading cause of blindness in older adults. Dr. Mitchell Fineman, Mid-Atlantic Retina/Wills Eye Hospital, provided an excellent overall description of macular conditions and current treatments. Dr. Anthony Silvetti, our agency’s Low Vision Optometrist, spoke about the benefits and importance of a low vision exam and properly prescribed low vision aids. I had the opportunity to provide information on Center for Vision Loss’s programs and services to help individuals face their everyday challenges in living with vision loss.

The audience of almost 200 people could also view magnification products from Optelec (many of which are also available at the Center for Vision Loss) and hear Charlie Collins. Collins, a lively motivational speaker who is blind, shared words of encouragement. In addition, a nutritionist and vision rehabilitation instructor offered helpful information.

Two important messages came through loud and clear—there is optimism for new treatments in the future and there is help available in the present. What positive outcomes came from this wonderful collaboration!
Jefferson Elementary School in Allentown stands one block away from the Center for Vision Loss. Each Fall, school administrators invite local businesses to attend an Annual Breakfast where they share information about the school’s needs and challenges and encourage them to become a Community Partner of the Month.

This September, Dawn Sellers, our Manager of Community Outreach and Special Projects, attended the event and signed up the Center for Vision Loss as the September Community Partner. Dawn has always provided free vision screenings for the students at Jefferson’s kindergarten registrations. When the PA Association for the Blind encouraged all of its member agencies to consider doing a special project to celebrate White Cane Day on October 15, Dawn immediately contacted Renee Mosser, assistant principal, to find out if the school would consider having our agency talk to the students about the importance of respecting people who are different from themselves. Mrs. Mosser loved the idea and told Dawn that her audience would be the winning classrooms from a “best behaved classroom” challenge among the 4th and 5th grade classes.

Dawn got Rita Lang, Manager of Innovative Programming, involved and together they invited customers Jeff Gerhard and Dianne Michels to join them in the presentations. The children learned that this year marked the 55th anniversary of the White Cane Law which celebrates the white cane as a symbol of a blind or visually impaired person’s ability to achieve a full and independent life. Both Jeff and Dianne also brought their guide dogs. Rita, who is also visually impaired and relies on a white cane, talked about orientation and mobility and learning to read Braille. And the students loved the fact that Rita had attended Jefferson as a student!

The White Cane Day project culminated in a poster contest. The children were invited to answer the question “When I see a person with a white cane it means….” and then draw a picture to depict what they had learned.

Forty students took up the challenge and Center for Vision Loss staff chose the top 6 drawings. These children received a prize package that included a Dr. Optical Coloring Book and various craft supplies. The rest of the children who participated in the contest received a box of crayons.

In the eyes of our agency, however, all of the children who took part in this project were winners. They learned about vision loss and the importance of understanding and sensitivity in dealing with people who are not like themselves for whatever reason. We hope that our White Cane Day Project can continue next year at Jefferson School and perhaps spread to other schools, too. For more information, contact Dawn at 610-433-6018, x. 224 or dawn.sellers@centerforvisionloss.org.

TOP 6 ARTISTS

(Left to right) Alexis, 11; Leah, 10; Yaxlei, 10

Atiyah, 9

Nashalie, 9

Roman, 9
Camp I CAN!, our first summer day camp for children 7-13 who are blind or visually impaired, ended on a high note. Our 5 campers worked together with camp staff to compose and sing a song which they debuted on the last day of camp, Friday, July 31. And sing they did! It was great fun to hear their enthusiasm as they entertained their parents, families and friends.

Camp I CAN!, jointly sponsored by the Center for Vision Loss and the Department of Labor and Industry, Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS), was held from July 21-24 and July 28-31, 2014. The goal of the camp was to introduce the participants to essential orientation and mobility training, lifeskills education and socialization activities through various interactive projects, crafts and field trips. The components were designed around educational interventions geared to each camper’s visual strengths and weaknesses to ensure that they would experience successful outcomes and find activities in which they excelled.

But forget about the dry explanation—this camp was FUN! During the morning, the campers worked on their skills. In the afternoon they would apply them in activities that included geocaching at Trout Park, bowling at Jordan Lanes, visiting TD Bank and exploring a fire engine courtesy of the Allentown Fire Department.

Rita Lang, our Manager of Innovative Programming, was the camp director. Social Services staff Gretchen Evans, Lisa Vasquez and Melanie Huth helped develop the curriculum. Alyssa Johnson was assistant camp director. Guest instructors included John Ford (Orientation and Mobility), Dianne Michels (Vision Rehabilitation), and Amy Killeen and Jana Lindsay (BBVS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors). Jeremiah Dubas, Erin Rapp and Amy Crowe provided volunteer support. Staffers Stephanie Houck, Shirley Moyer, Carla Nemeroff and Peter Carr also assisted. Planning is already underway for 2015 with dates of August 3-6 and 10-13. For more information contact Rita Lang at rita.lang@centerforvisionloss.org or 610-433-6018, x. 231.

A FEW OF OUR FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT CAMP

Averi, 6 (left) - “I liked when we went bowling.”
Nicole, 8 (right) - “I loved going to the zoo and learning how to spread cheese on bread in our dining skills session.”
Makayla, 8 - “I didn’t know that vision impaired people folded their money in different ways.”
Stefan, 14 - “I want to come back as a volunteer next year.”
Deven, 14 - “The volunteers were really cool people and I enjoyed having lunch at McDonalds.”
As the year comes to a close, many people consider making a legacy, or planned, gift to their favorite charity to gain a tax advantage. There are a variety of options that can be used to make a gift to the Center for Vision Loss through the agency’s Endowment Foundation not only by December 31 but throughout the year, as well. The Endowment Foundation, a 501(c)3, not-for-profit corporation, was established in 1980 to provide funding opportunities based on best investment practices that will ensure the sustainability of the Center for Vision Loss and its mission for the future including providing:

► Services and programs which empower seniors to live well with vision loss
► Escorted transportation for our customers who can no longer drive
► Introduction to and training for the newest assistive technology which allows blind and visually impaired customers to enhance their independence
► Vision screenings using the most advanced technology to determine healthy vision in our youngest population
► No cost eye exams and glasses for people in need

THE HELEN KELLER SOCIETY

The Helen Keller Society is our agency’s special legacy gift society. People of all backgrounds and incomes who wish to ensure the future of the Center for Vision Loss are invited to join The Helen Keller Society. Legacy gifts can be designated for general operating, for a specific purpose or to remember a person who has held a significant place in your life. Contributions may take the form of:

► Gifts of Cash of $1,000 or more
► Gifts by Bequest
► Gifts of Stocks/Securities
► Gifts of Life Insurance
► Gifts by Retirement Accounts

Potential legacy gift donors are invited to contact the following individuals for more information about The Helen Keller Society or to review other options:

Martin Lang, Endowment Board President
610-439-5040 or martylang@langfaylorchomo.com.

Karen Z. Huetter, Development Director
610-433-6018, x. 241 or karen.huetter@centerforvisionloss.org

ENJOY! SHARE! VOLUNTEER!

In this season of gift giving from the heart, the Center for Vision Loss encourages you to consider giving us the Gift of Time. Contact Rita Lang, Volunteer Coordinator, at 610-433-6018, x. 231 or rita.lang@centerforvisionloss.org to explore various volunteer opportunities.
Pictured Above: On November 12, members of the Men’s Clubhouse met to hone their dining skills with Vision Rehabilitation Teacher Dianne Michels. Dianne reviewed how to pour hot and cold liquids then shared useful tips about locating plates, utensils and glassware on the table, cutting meat and using a knife and fork together as a guide to keep food on the plate.

Pictured Above: On September 11, Aetna and Air Products employees volunteered as sighted guides for our annual customer shopping trip to the Lehigh Valley Mall, a project of the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley’s “Day of Caring.”

Pictured Above: On September 26, the Macula Vision Research Foundation (MVRF) in collaboration with the Center for Vision Loss (CVL) presented a free SupportSight Seminar about macular degeneration at DeSales University. Presenters included (left to right) Doug Yingling (CVL), Dawn Prall George (MVRF), Charlie Collins (International Inspirational Speaker) and Mitchell S. Fineman, MD (Wills Eye Hospital).

Pictured above: On October 14, Lehigh Valley and Monroe customers explored the Sensory Trail at the Pool Wildlife Sanctuary in Emmaus. Both the Trail and our Monroe office’s new-to-us Kia were made possible by grants from the ESSA Bank & Trust Foundation. We thank the trustees for their community spirit which supported two important projects that improve the lives of individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

Pictured Above: On October 28 (Lehigh Valley) and 31 (Monroe), Halloween parties abounded for our customers. An Egyptian princess, Sandra Dee, Danny Zucko, and a 4-legged skeleton all were observed having a great time! Sponsors of the parties included the Alton Park and Lehigh Valley Saturday AM Lions Clubs in the Lehigh Valley and the NuVisions Activity Group in Monroe.

Pictured above: On September 30, the annual District 14-K Lions Needs Night raised $50,230 to support our agency in 2014-2015. At this event, we also thanked our Lions friends for contributing $52,476 in 2013-2014.

Pictured above: On November 18, Monroe Office Manager Cindi Starner (left) received a $100 donation from the Western Pocono Lioness Club. Club member and Center for Vision Loss customer Bernice Cook (right) made the presentation.
The Center for Vision Loss is the region’s only community benefit organization dedicated to improving the lives of people affected by vision loss. Our programs and services touch the lives of residents in Lehigh, Northampton and Monroe Counties. Help us continue to “look beyond vision” with your tax-deductible gift today. Enclosed please find my gift in the amount of $___________.

Name__________________________________
Address________________________________
City ____________________ ST ___ Zip _____
Phone (_________)_______________________
E-mail __________________________________

☐ Please check here if you give us permission to add your e-mail address to our electronic mailing list. We will never share your e-mail address with any other group.

This gift is a tribute ☐ In Honor Of ☐ In Memory Of

Name__________________________________

☐ Please notify the following person regarding this tribute gift:

Name__________________________________
Address________________________________
City ____________________ ST ___ Zip _____

Please detach and send with your contribution to:
Center for Vision Loss
845 West Wyoming St.
Allentown, PA 18103

All gifts to Center for Vision Loss are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. “The official registration and financial information of the Center for Vision Loss may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.”

Questions?
Contact the Development Office at 610-433-6018, x. 241.
SAVE THE DATES!

Community Days at the 2015 Lehigh Valley Auto Show
Thursday, March 19 & Friday, March 20, 2015 - Tickets $10 each
Celebrate Spring with this sweet deal - For each ticket the Center for Vision Loss sells, we will receive $5.00 from the Greater Lehigh Valley Auto Dealers Association (GLAVDA).

Tickets are available NOW - Call 610-433-6018, x. 241.

We recently received a $2,000 grant from GLAVDA to support our Camp I CAN! in August, 2015. Let's join together now to support GLAVDA and its charitable grants program!

Please let us know if you would rather receive this newsletter electronically by calling 610.433.6018, x 241 or go to our website at www.centerforvisionloss.org. Also let us know if your mailing address has changed or if you wish to be removed from our list.

VISION is published three times a year by the Center for Vision Loss for our donors, volunteers and friends in the community.

Douglas A. Yingling       Karen Z. Huetter
Executive Director        Editor

“It’s a terrible thing to see and have no vision.” Helen Keller

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