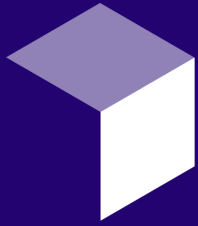


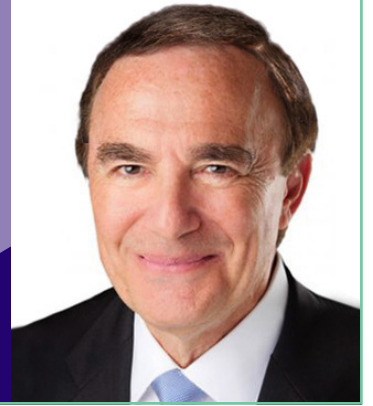
December 2022



Lighthouse Guild

Lighthouse Guild In Brief

From Dr. Cal Roberts, President and CEO



Dear Friends,

Making Spirits Bright for Children with Vision Loss

The holiday season can be an exciting and busy time of year. For parents of children with visual impairment and other disabilities, it also requires a lot of extra planning. As families begin making their holiday plans, Lighthouse Guild recommends some tips to make the season memorable:

- Include your child when planning gatherings or activities.
- Schedule events and activities in advance to provide enough time to prepare.
- Be aware of your child's comfort level with crowds, lights, sounds, and other sensory issues.
- If you are hosting a gathering, encourage your child to help you by assigning tasks such as setting the table, hanging guests' coats, or offering food and drinks.
- If you plan to see a performance or visit a museum, call ahead to request accommodations such as preferred seating, wheelchair access, and audio guides.



Photo: A smiling mother shows her excited son a holiday cookie while seated in front of twinkling lights.

Holiday Travel

Changes in routines, especially in new and unfamiliar places, can be stressful for parents and children. Here are a few tips to help you and your family travel with ease:

- Book reservations in advance and ask about accommodations such as cribs and wheelchair accessibility.
- Describe the sequence of events according to your child's level of understanding to help prepare them for the transitions, changes, and sounds they could encounter.
- Create a calendar to help your child understand when and where you are going.
- Pack medications, snacks, books, games, devices, extra chargers, and comfort objects, such as plush toys.
- Reach out to Disability Services departments of parks and entertainment venues to help plan your trip.

For more tips, visit our [website](#).

And for People of All Ages

Though the holidays can be a delightful source of joy and happiness, the celebration can also trigger negative feelings. People of all ages with vision loss have added challenges to manage. For tips on avoiding the holiday blues, visit our [website](#). If you, or someone you know, are having difficulty coping, **Lighthouse Guild Behavioral Health** professionals are here for you now and throughout the year. We can help you deal with your anxiety, depression, or difficulty adjusting to vision loss and other health conditions.

Partnership to Expand Treatment Options

Lighthouse Guild has entered a partnership with **Bionic Sight**, the developer of treatments and technologies for advanced stage blindness that will change the landscape of treatment for people who are blind. Bionic Sight’s technology focuses on restoring sight to patients with advanced stage blindness due to retinal degenerative diseases, such as retinitis pigmentosa.

“Lighthouse Guild and Bionic Sight have a shared commitment to utilizing technology to transform the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired.”

—Dr. Sheila Nirenberg



Photo: A quote, “Lighthouse Guild and Bionic Sight have a shared commitment to utilizing technology to transform the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired,” next to a photo of Lighthouse Guild President and CEO Dr. Calvin Roberts shaking hands with Bionic Sight founder Dr. Sheila Nirenberg.

The technology is based on discoveries by researcher and developer Sheila Nirenberg, PhD, a professor at Weill Medical College of Cornell University and the founder of Bionic Sight.

“Lighthouse Guild and Bionic Sight have a shared commitment to utilizing technology to transform the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired,” said Dr. Nirenberg. “Our goals are naturally aligned. Through this partnership, we will be able to continue exploring and implementing innovative approaches and treatments.”

To learn more about this mission-driven initiative, visit our **website**. Lighthouse Guild is always looking for collaborators to help make the vision of a world where no person is limited by their visual capacity a reality. Check out our **website** for partnership opportunities.

Dr. Mary Yumei Chang Medical Director

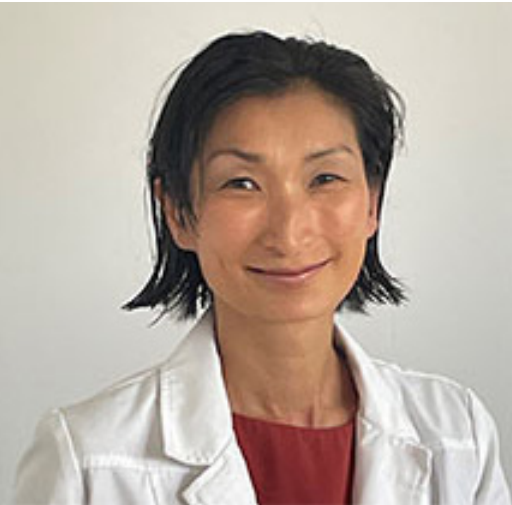


Photo: “Dr. Mary Yumei Chang Medical Director,” next to a portrait of Dr. Chang.

We welcome Mary Yumei Chang, MD to our team of experts as Medical Director of our Health Center. Dr. Chang enjoys teaching and partnering with her patients. She says, “I adhere to a holistic approach to medicine that is humane, convenient, and pragmatic.”

Dr. Chang specializes in Internal Medicine. She graduated from Northwestern University before completing her Doctorate in Medicine at David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and has received honors in Gynecology and Internal Medicine. After completing her residency at Mount Sinai Downtown, she served as a Hospitalist at Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn. She has served as the Medical Director for the onsite health centers at Bank of New York’s New Jersey and New York offices before moving to Mount Sinai Brooklyn Heights and then joining us at Lighthouse Guild.

Dr. Chang shares, “I am honored to serve Lighthouse Guild and strive to provide the highest level of care to those with and without visual disabilities.”

To learn more about Dr. Chang, visit our **website**. If you need to visit our Health Center, please schedule an **appointment**.

Matthew is Out of This World

In 2019, 15-year-old high school student Matthew lived a happy, everyday teenage life until his world was turned upside down. Matthew was diagnosed with a brain tumor, resulting in two surgeries to remove the malignant mass. When Matthew awoke after the second surgery, he was left completely blind. The sudden loss of sight shocked Matthew and his family. He shares, “After losing my vision, it was very hard to adapt for a long time. It’s why I was out of school for like one full year.”

Matthew was referred to Lighthouse Guild in 2020 where he learned about the many programs and services offered. The **Youth Transition Program** interested him most. He says, “[T]hat was the [program] that I felt would introduce me to the world. To the blind community.”

Matthew started the program before he went back to school. It was a way for him to socialize with other kids, many of whom were the first kids he had ever met who were blind. At the time, the program was remote, but Matthew says it was welcoming and fun – which he credits to the Coordinator of Youth Programs, Jaydan Mitchell. “[Jaydan] knew that I was new to this whole thing, so he was very supportive and encouraging,” Matthew shares. “He always knew when I had a hard time and made me feel comfortable.” Matthew feels the program helped him adjust, gave him confidence, and taught him the needed skills to move forward.

“I think the most important thing that I learned in the [Youth Transition] Program was you have to be independent and believe that you can do it,” Matthew says. “Also, practice these skills. Because the more you practice them, the more you’ll be familiarized with them. A skill you don’t practice is like a muscle that you’re not stretching and not working out. It’s all about the habit of doing things.”

Just three years later, 18-year-old Matthew is getting ready to graduate high school and has continued his passion for playing and teaching music. He says, “I guess one thing I’ve learned about myself throughout this adaptation is that I have the ability to handle whatever’s thrown at me. I never knew that about myself, and now I have the proof. I’m applying to college as a blind person, and it seems I’m doing okay.”

The most important thing that I learned in the [Youth Transition] Program was you have to be independent and believe you can do it.”

—Matthew



Photo: A quote, “The most important thing that I learned in the [Youth Transition] Program was you have to be independent and believe you can do it,” next to a photo of Matthew standing in front of the NASA sign.

Matthew also receives instruction from Adaptive Technology Specialist Ed Plumacher, who introduced him to VoiceOver accessible technology. VoiceOver is a gesture-based screen reader that allows users to navigate an iOS device even if they don’t see the screen. It gives audible descriptions of what’s on the screen, including the battery level, who is calling, and which app your finger is on.

Matthew’s father, Ken, says, “Matthew has learned and gained confidence from instructors, the [Youth Transition] Program, Lighthouse Guild, and it just goes on and on.” He recalls one instance when Matthew was using a transportation service and was dropped off in an unfamiliar location, which was disorienting. Due to the mobility instruction and navigation tools he learned, Matthew was able to stay calm and find his way. Ken shares, “He’s been able to navigate his way home utilizing all the skills he learned. We’re so proud. We’re also grateful.”

Being a Mentor

Matthew joined Lighthouse Guild’s **Tech Pals**, a program that pairs mentors who are blind or visually impaired, ages 18-24, with older adults age 55+ who are blind or visually impaired and have an interest in improving skills with using their mobile phones and/or tablets. As a mentor, Matthew teaches older adults how to use assistive technology. He says, “I’m giving back to the community and teaching them what I learned only two years ago.”

Matthew's Space Mission

Recently, Matthew returned from NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, where he participated (virtually) in a mission in outer space!

The Artemis I mission made history in November 2022 by taking Alexa, Amazon's AI voice service, onboard the Orion spacecraft. Earlier this year, Amazon and Lockheed Martin announced plans to integrate Alexa into the Orion spacecraft for Artemis I, the first of several NASA missions intended to bring the first woman and the next man to the Moon. Alexa joined the mission as part of Callisto, a technology demonstration payload developed by Lockheed Martin, Amazon, and Cisco.

This December, Matthew was selected to represent Lighthouse Guild at NASA's Johnson Space Center to join the virtual Artemis I crew and tour the facility. During the tour, Matthew learned about the process astronauts must go through to prepare for missions and the challenging conditions they face while in space. He also touched the various materials of the astronaut suit used to protect them from extreme temperature and atmospheric pressure changes. Matthew said, "The coolest part was feeling the material of the astronaut's suit!"

From inside a special room in Mission Control Center within Johnson Space Center, Matthew communicated directly with Alexa onboard Orion, asking questions about the mission, and giving commands. Some questions included asking Alexa how many miles away Orion was from Earth and how fast the spacecraft traveled. He also commanded Alexa to change the light within the spacecraft from red to green and got Alexa to recite a fun space rap!

Matthew says, "It was a truly emotional experience. I felt WOW! I got to be one of the few people in the whole world, in the whole country, that talked to Alexa while they were in space." Matthew explained the experience, "It just feels like I'm in a totally different world like I'm in outer space. It's just a wonderful opportunity. I feel that being part of this and listening to everything as a visually impaired person reminds me just how far technology has come and what's in store in the future."

Read more about Matthew on our [website](#).

Lighthouse Guild and Team USA Honored by Lions Club

The **New York Financial District Lions Club** recognized Lighthouse Guild and the 2022 Team USA Blind Baseball team at their 10th anniversary celebration. Lighthouse Guild's Chief Operating Officer Paul Misiti represented our organization while Lighthouse Guild client Kiana Glanton, Adaptive Technology Specialist Ed Plumacher, Rehabilitation Specialist Lilly Harris, and Teacher of the Visually Impaired and Orientation and Mobility instructor Amanda Makson, who also works with Lighthouse Guild's Youth Services Program, proudly displayed the bronze medals they won as members of Team USA at the 2022 WBSC Blind Baseball International Cup.



Photo: From left to right, Kiana Glanton, Paul Misiti, Ed Plumacher, Amanda Makson, and Lilly Harris.

Can New Tech Make Museums Accessible?

It sure can! Listen to the latest episode of our podcast "**On Tech and Vision with Dr. Cal Roberts**," where we explore how new technology can help make public spaces as accessible to people who are blind as they are to sighted people. I speak with three innovators who are applying new technologies paired with smartphone capabilities to revolutionize indoor navigation, orientation, and information transfer. Idan Meir, co-founder of **RightHear**, which uses Apple's iBeacon technology to make visual signage dynamic and accessible via audio descriptions. Javier Pita Lozano, CEO of **NaviLens**, a technology that marries labelling information with orientation guidance to increase accessibility of public spaces and transportation infrastructure for people with vision impairment; and Mike May, chief evangelist at **GoodMaps**, which uses LiDAR and geocoding to map the interior of a space.

Visionary Kick-Off

We kicked off our 16th season in Palm Beach with a festive Holiday Tea on December 7. **Jacqueline Weld Drake** graciously hosted the event at her home in Palm Beach. Ms. Weld Drake and **James R. Borynack** will be honored at our **Annual Visionary Evening Dinner** on February 27, 2023, for their philanthropic vision and efforts to further Lighthouse Guild's goals and mission.



Photo: From left to right, Dr. Calvin Roberts, Jackie Weld Drake, and James Borynack

For more information or to join us in Palm Beach for our Visionary Evening Dinner, contact Mona de Sayve at **561-635-5342** or **mdesayve@lighthouseguild.org**

New Appointment

I am pleased to announce that I have the honor of representing Lighthouse Guild on the **American Academy of Ophthalmology's Vision Rehabilitation Committee**. The committee is a driving force in making the provision of, or referral to, vision rehabilitation the standard of care for individuals who experience blindness or low vision — ultimately lessening the impact of vision loss and improving patients' independence and quality of life.

Inspiring Gifts

Gifts come in all forms. The best gift is the one that enables people to live the lives they aspire to. Thanks to your support, Lighthouse Guild can provide the services and programs that inspire people who are visually impaired to reach their dreams. We hope you will take the time before the end of this year to give an inspiring **gift of support** to Lighthouse Guild.

As gifts come in all forms, so does giving. Visit our website to learn about two special ways you can provide support: establishing a **Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA)** or making an **IRA Rollover gift**. To learn more about how you can help Lighthouse Guild, please call Donna Lippman, Director of Gift Planning, at 646-874-8443 or email at **dlippman@lighthouseguild.org**.

Please also consider other gifts such as **volunteering**, **referring** people who can benefit from our services, and spreading the word on **Twitter** and **Facebook**!

On behalf of all of us at Lighthouse Guild, we wish you and your family a happy holiday season and healthy new year!

Calvin W. Roberts, MD
President and CEO, Lighthouse Guild
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