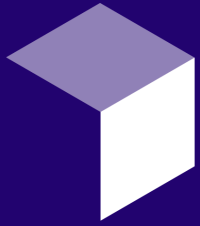
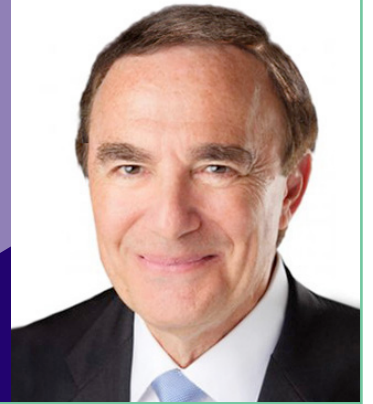


January 2024



# Lighthouse Guild

**Lighthouse Guild In Brief**  
From Dr. Cal Roberts, President and CEO



## Listen to the Audio

Dear Friends,

### Glaucoma: Myths vs. Facts

Over 3 million people in the United States are affected by Glaucoma. Known as the “silent thief of sight,” it robs people of vision slowly and without early symptoms. **January is Glaucoma Awareness Month**, a great time to emphasize the importance of regular eye check-ups for early detection of Glaucoma and other eye diseases.

Glaucoma damages the eye’s optic nerve. As the disease progresses, it can lead to permanent vision loss. Many misconceptions exist about Glaucoma, potentially leading people to underestimate their risk. Knowing the facts is crucial to preventing vision loss.

#### **Myth: People with good vision are immune to Glaucoma.**

**Fact:** Most forms of glaucoma progress without any symptoms; therefore, it is crucial to have a comprehensive dilated eye exam that can detect the disease in its early stages. People with good vision may not notice symptoms until the late stages; however, early detection and treatment increase the chances of preserving vision.



Photo: An older man with a beard putting drops in his eyes.

#### **Myth: Glaucoma cannot be treated.**

**Fact:** “It’s important to know that while glaucoma cannot be prevented or cured, it is treatable,” says Dr. Laura Sperazza, Director of Vision Rehabilitation Services at Lighthouse Guild. Glaucoma does not have to lead to blindness. Early intervention can protect vision. Treatments such as prescription eye drops, oral medicines, laser treatment, and surgery can slow or prevent vision loss from Glaucoma. Listen to Dr. Sperazza’s [interview](#) about Glaucoma.

#### **Myth: Only older people get Glaucoma.**

**Fact:** Although people over 60 face a higher risk of developing Glaucoma, certain types of Glaucoma can affect younger individuals, including children and infants.

#### **Myth: Absence of family history means no risk of Glaucoma.**

**Fact:** Glaucoma can run in families. However, it can affect anyone, including people with no family history. Regular eye screenings are essential for everyone.

Knowing the facts is key to maintaining optimal eye health and preventing vision loss from Glaucoma. For more facts on Glaucoma, visit our [website](#). You can also request an [appointment](#) for an eye exam with one of our vision experts.

## Edward S. Kornreich Joins Lighthouse Guild's Board

We are pleased to announce that Edward S. Kornreich has joined our Board of Directors. As the past long-standing chair of the Health Care Department of Proskauer Rose LLP, an international law firm, and as past chair of the Health Law Section and Health Law Committee, respectively, of the New York State and New York City Bar Associations, Mr. Kornreich is a recognized authority on the legal, regulatory, and business issues related to healthcare services.

“Edward’s expertise, guidance and experience will be invaluable as we further our mission of providing exceptional services to our clients and people who are visually impaired worldwide.” said James M. Dubin, Chairman of the Board of Lighthouse Guild.

Mr. Kornreich frequently writes and lectures on Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement, healthcare integration, not-for-profit law, corporate governance issues, and applying federal and state anti-kickback and “Stark” laws to healthcare transactions. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Columbia University, Columbia College, and a Juris Doctor from Harvard Law School, graduating magna cum laude and as a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

“I have worked with Lighthouse Guild for more than 40 years and have long admired its services, programs, and dedicated staff.”

—Edward Kornreich



Photo: A quote, “I have worked with Lighthouse Guild for more than 40 years and have long admired its services, programs, and dedicated staff,” next to a portrait of Edward Kornreich.

“I am excited to bring my expertise to Lighthouse Guild in a new capacity. I have worked with Lighthouse Guild for more than 40 years and have long admired its services, programs, and dedicated staff,” Mr. Kornreich said. “As the son of a visually impaired but well-functioning father, I am acutely aware of the challenges individuals who are visually impaired face and their ability to overcome or mitigate such challenges with the help of the assistance provided by Lighthouse Guild and other such organizations.”

To learn more about Mr. Kornreich, visit our [website](#).

## Tax Preparation Program

For New Yorkers who are blind or visually impaired, Lighthouse Guild can assist you with filing your 2023 federal, state and city income tax returns. Through our partnership with the IRS and the Foodbank for New York City, we are able to offer assistance in-person at Lighthouse Guild Manhattan headquarters and virtually. Check out our [website](#) for more information.



Photo: A portion of a one-hundred-dollar bill on the top left corner with the top of an IRS form 1040 beneath it and the tip of a silver pen pointing to the “1040” of the form.

## Laisha's Paths to Confidence

In 2009, Laisha had a health crisis. She was diagnosed with Lupus, but fortunately, she says at the moment, it is not affecting her. It was in 2016 when another crisis occurred — Laisha noticed she was having issues with her vision. She could not see people from a distance, and it was thought that she needed prescription glasses. However, her vision worsened, and the glasses did not help. Laisha says, "I saw multiple vision experts and rheumatologists to get answers, and they were unsure what was happening. I had several laser procedures, and they ended up making my vision worse."

In 2017, Laisha's mother moved the family from the Dominican Republic to New York for a new opinion on her eye condition. After connecting with retinal specialists at Columbia Presbyterian, Laisha was diagnosed with Uveitis and considered legally blind. Uveitis is an inflammation in the eye's middle layer, called the uvea, which includes the iris, ciliary body, and choroid. The uvea supplies blood to the retina. If not treated quickly, it can lead to complications and vision loss. Laisha received steroid infusions and had four eye surgeries following the diagnosis. She says, "I have no vision in my left eye, and I have slight vision in my right eye, which is what I work with."

### Educational Path

Laisha attended the High School for Media and Communications. She says, "It was great. The school provided me with access to the Educational Vision Services (EVS) program that gave me my first mobility and technology training. I learned to use the white cane, and I had someone walking around the campus with me as a guide. I also got to learn Braille. The training at the school was life-changing." She went on to major in the performing arts at Bronx Community College and successfully graduated in June 2023.

**"If someone who is visually impaired gets the chance to go to Lighthouse Guild, know that you are going to be helped, and you will feel secure by the services they provide to you."**

**—Laisha**

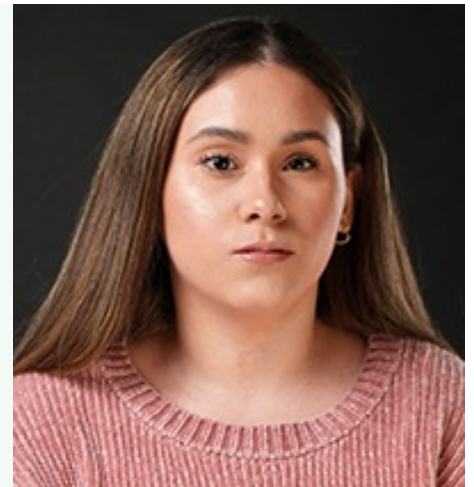


Photo: A quote, "If someone who is visually impaired gets the chance to go to Lighthouse Guild, know that you are going to be helped, and you will feel secure by the services they provide to you," next to a portrait of Laisha.

### Connecting to Lighthouse Guild

In early 2018, Laisha's vision teacher, mobility instructor, and career path instructor from the EVS program informed her about the New York State Commission for the Blind, which connected her to Lighthouse Guild.

At Lighthouse Guild, Laisha worked with a mobility instructor who gave her advanced training on using the white cane. She learned how to navigate sidewalks, cross streets, and handle everything in between. "I am grateful because they also provided me with a social worker to help me," she says. "One of the most important things to me was the cooking lessons. Those classes were extremely helpful and beneficial. Not only were they fun for me, but they were also meaningful because I used the cooking training that I received daily."

### Young Adult Tele-Support Program

In 2020, Laisha joined the **Young Adult Tele Support Program**. Outreach and Referral Coordinator Lisa Miller informed her about the program. Laisha says, "When she told me, I recall saying to her, 'Do you mean to tell me that there is a group for people like me?'"

Laisha shares, "It has been a wonderful experience. In school, I never felt like I was able to fit into anything... Being legally blind, I did not make a lot of friends in high school, and since I was using a white cane, most people were afraid to approach me. Having a group of people, I can talk to about things that happened to me during the day or experiences that happened to me is extremely helpful... It feels good to talk to others who can relate."

Laisha shares that Coordinator of Youth Programs Jaydan Mitchell is "an incredible human being, and we need more of him in the world." She continues, "I am so thankful for everything he has done to help me. Jaydan always has the right words and guidance to help all of us in the meetings with whatever we are going through. Everything he says in the tele-support group meetings is powerful and helpful."

“I feel like every time I tried to find a place to fit in, whether in high school or college, it didn’t work because I was the odd one, and no one could relate to what I was experiencing,” Laisha says. “And now, it is such a nice feeling to have that space and freedom where I can talk about things that I cannot talk about to other people.”

### **Technology Path**

Laisha works as a Social Media Coordinator. She also participates in Lighthouse Guild’s **Tech Pals**, a program that matches young adults (aged 18-24) who are blind or visually impaired to serve as technology mentors to older adults aged 55+ who are also dealing with vision loss. The mentors teach the older adults how to use accessibility features and apps on their mobile phones and tablets. She feels very happy to have the opportunity in Tech Pals to work on her technology skills and give back to the community of people who are visually impaired. Laisha says, “It’s a wonderful experience and the older adults who participate in the program are inspiring. Helping them feel confident by learning skills such as how to use a mobile phone makes my day.”

### **Good Advice**

When asked what she would advise someone who is newly diagnosed with vision impairment, Laisha says, “I would tell them what I would have wanted to hear when I was 17 and discovered I was having vision loss, which is be nice to yourself. Try not to be so harsh on yourself because, at the end of this road, everything will fall into place. Right now, I cannot assure you that everything is going to be fine because it’s probably not, but somehow, and in some way, you are going to accept who you are because you are not your visual impairment; you are you.”

Laisha says, “If someone who is visually impaired gets the chance to go to Lighthouse Guild, know that you are going to be helped, and you will feel secure by the services they provide to you. They are doing everything possible to help you succeed in life.”

### **Future Path**

Laisha’s life goal is to continue spreading awareness about resources to the community of people who are visually impaired. She says, “I plan to help others become more aware so they can access the necessary services they require. I know there was a time when I started losing my vision that it would have been helpful to me if I had more information.”

Laisha performs with Epic Players, a neuro-inclusive theatre company that opens the stage to all types of artists and seeks to shine a light on neuro-diverse talent. She says “It is an opportunity to share who I am as a woman who is disabled as well as perform.” It is also another avenue by which she can reach her important life goal. Visit our [website](#) to read more about Laisha’s amazing journey.

## **Lighthouse Guild Receives the John and Jane Shalam Award**

Lighthouse Guild is honored to be this year’s recipient of the prestigious **John and Jane Shalam Award** for Visionary Efforts in Combating Social Isolation through programs like our Tele-Support groups and Telehealth services. Named in tribute to John and Jane Shalam for their significant contributions to the consumer technology industry, it was presented at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Nevada. This esteemed recognition finds its roots in John Shalam’s role as the Founding Chair of the Consumer Technology Association (CTA) Foundation, where he collaborated with CTA and the initial Board of Trustees to establish the foundation, set its mission, and build it to address social isolation challenges.

Today, thanks to the collective efforts inspired by John and Jane Shalam, the CTA Foundation has provided over \$6.8 million in support to non-profit organizations across the United States, utilizing technology to enhance the quality of life for older adults and people with disabilities.



Photo: Left to right, Denise Gibson, Cofounder and Chair, Ice Mobility and CTA Foundation Board Member, Lighthouse Guild Chief Technology Officer Dr. Bryan Wolynski receiving the award on behalf of Lighthouse Guild and Director of the CTA Foundation Steve Ewell.

The formal presentation of the John and Jane Shalam Award at CES 2024 highlighted our organization's pivotal role in addressing social isolation and helping to foster independence among the community of people who are visually impaired.

To read more about The Shalam Award and the presentation visit our [website](#).

## Travel Grants for People Who are Visually Impaired

Thanks to successful fundraising efforts fueled by a generous grant from Foundation Fighting Blindness co-founder Gordon Gund, **Flight for Sight** has announced a second round of \$10,000 travel grants for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Visit the Flight for Sight [website](#) for more information or to apply.

## Kickoff Reception for Lighthouse Guild's Annual Visionary Evening

The Findlay Galleries on Worth Avenue in Palm Beach, the iconic, family-owned art business founded in 1870, hosted a kickoff cocktail reception on January 25, for supporters and friends. The evening included a warm welcome from **James Borynack**, CEO and Chairman of Findlay Galleries and **Marc Rosen**, Founder of the Palm Beach Friends of Lighthouse Guild, as well as my presentation about the tremendous power of assistive technology.



Photos: Left to right, James Borynack, Maestro Gerard Schwarz and Dr. Calvin Roberts; Michael Donnell, Ambassador David and Jennifer Fischer and Thomas Quick.

The reception helped to build momentum for Lighthouse Guild's "**A Visionary Evening Dinner**" which will salute the arts and recite contributions of **Beth DeWoody** and **Firooz Zahedi**, who have been long-standing partners in our work and influential figures in the visual arts community. We will also be honoring **Maestro Gerard Schwarz**, who magnificently leads the Palm Beach Symphony. This year, we are pleased to feature the exceptional talents of cabaret stars **Billy Stritch** and **Seth Sikes**.

For more information or to join us in Palm Beach for our "**A Visionary Evening Dinner**" on **February 26, 2024**, contact Mona de Sayve at **561-635-5342** or [mona\\_desayve@hotmail.com](mailto:mona_desayve@hotmail.com)

## Join Team #NoLimits in the 2024 TD Five Boro Bike Tour

On **Sunday, May 5, 2024**, **Lighthouse Guild** and the **Foreseeable Future Foundation** share the common goal of supporting individuals of all ages who are blind or visually impaired, along with their families. We are teaming up to form Team #NoLimits and ride in the **TD Five Boro Bike Tour** – one of New York City's iconic athletic events.



Graphic image: A blue sky with white clouds and a black silhouette of two cyclists on a tandem racing bike with Lighthouse Guild and Foreseeable Future Foundation logos positioned above them.

**Registration is officially open!** Join our team for an unforgettable day cycling through New York City and help make a difference in the lives of people with vision loss. Riders will raise awareness and funds that will directly support the services of Lighthouse Guild and Foreseeable Future Foundation while crisscrossing all five boroughs with over 32,000 other cyclists. Visit our [website](#) for more information on how to **join** our team or **support** our riders!

## Events

Don't miss some of our upcoming virtual and in-person events:

**February 5** | Tax Preparation Program Begins | New York City

**February 19** | Tele-Support Talk: Breaking Barriers with Visionary Resilience | Online

**February 20** | Tech Talk: AI Apps and What's the Difference Between Them? | Online

**February 26** | A Visionary Evening: Saluting the Arts | Palm Beach, Florida

For tickets or more information about A Visionary Evening, contact Mona de Sayve at **561-635-5342** or [mona\\_desayve@hotmail.com](mailto:mona_desayve@hotmail.com)

With your help, people with vision impairment can get all the support and resources they need to succeed in life! Please give 2024 a kick-start by supporting our mission through **donating**, **volunteering**, **referring** people who can benefit from our programs and services, or spreading the word on X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook.

Be well and stay safe,



**Calvin W. Roberts, MD**  
President and CEO, Lighthouse Guild  
Twitter: @EyeDrCal

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**Volunteer:** [lighthouseguild.org/volunteer/](https://lighthouseguild.org/volunteer/)

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