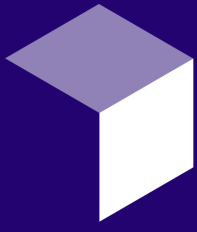


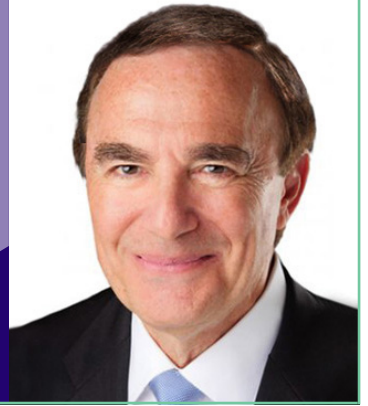
July 2023



Lighthouse Guild

Lighthouse Guild In Brief

From Dr. Cal Roberts, President and CEO



Listen to the audio

Dear Friends,

In Celebration of #DisabilityPride and #ADA33

During **Disability Pride Month**, which coincides with the anniversary of the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** on July 26th, we celebrate the empowerment and achievements of individuals with disabilities, including those who are blind or visually impaired. The ADA has been instrumental in advancing the rights and accessibility for people with vision impairments, ensuring equal opportunities in education, employment, and public services. This month serves as a powerful reminder to embrace diversity and promote a society that values the unique perspectives and capabilities of individuals with vision impairment, encouraging continued efforts to break down barriers, improve accessibility, and foster a more inclusive world for all.



Photo: A young man with vision impairment is typing at his computer keyboard in an office. He is conversing with a female colleague who appears on the left of the photo.

At Lighthouse Guild it is our mission to provide exceptional services that inspire people who are blind or visually impaired to attain their goals. As we commemorate Disability Pride Month in New York City and in other areas of the nation, we offer information and tips on our [website](#) that can be helpful to people who have a vision impairment and can be shared with family members and friends.

Moving Towards Accessible Transportation

Lighthouse Guild was pleased to show support at the **Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA)** press conference celebrating Disability Pride Month and announcing new wayfinding features for customers with disabilities coming to 11 subway stations and all 24 stops on the M66 bus route in Manhattan.



Photos: Left photo, back row, left to right, Lighthouse Guild Chief Technology Officer Dr. Bryan Wolynski and Chief Operating Officer Paul Misiti and N.Y. State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal; front row, MTA Chief Accessibility Officer Quemeuel Arroyo; Right photo, NaviLens informational/guidance code above a sign of the Lincoln Center subway stop.

One of the many innovative solutions that is being employed is the **NaviLens** guidance system. Lighthouse Guild was the first U.S. organization to test this technology and we are thrilled the MTA is utilizing this innovation along with the rest of the accessibility solutions.

We thank **Senator Holyman-Sigal** and the MTA for working to improve the accessibility of NY’s transportation system. Visit our **website** to learn more.

April’s Long History and Strong Connection

April is 77 years old and a lifelong New Yorker who began her connection with Lighthouse Guild professionally and later as a client receiving services and a volunteer. Her story is a unique perspective in that highlights the profound impact of her multiple relationships with our organization.

April was diagnosed with Stargardt’s disease when she was eight years old. Stargardt’s disease is a genetic eye disorder that affects the retina, causing a gradual loss of central vision, and is characterized by the accumulation of lipofuscin deposits in the macula, leading to progressive vision impairment.

“The Vision Rehabilitation Services at Lighthouse Guild are essential, along with the Daily Living Skills, Mobility Training Programs, and the Reading Services.”

—April


A portrait of April, a woman with short brown hair, wearing a white collared shirt, smiling slightly. She is positioned in front of a wooden bookshelf.

Photo: A quote, The Vision Rehabilitation Services at Lighthouse Guild are essential, along with the Daily Living Skills, Mobility Training Programs, and the Reading Services,” next to a portrait of April.

April Connects with Lighthouse International

In 1977 while in graduate school, April took a course with the former Medical Director, Ophthalmological Advisor, and Director of Lighthouse Guild Low Vision Services, the late Dr. Eleanor E. Faye. Dr. Faye told April about a teaching position at Lighthouse International (one of the two organizations that merged to form Lighthouse Guild). April landed the role and when Lighthouse International added a communication skills course for adult students who are visually impaired, she became a Communication Clinical Instructor teaching basic communication skills, typing, and signature improvement. She was also a per diem instructor for GED and college preparation. When the position became full-time, she taught adults who are disabled, aged 18 to early thirties.

April Connects with The Jewish Guild for the Blind

In 1981, April accepted a position as Communication Skills Instructor in the Rehabilitation Program at The Jewish Guild for the Blind (one of the two organizations that merged to form Lighthouse Guild). She also helped open its newly formed Early Intervention Program. In 1986, she changed course, and with her background in data processing and computer programming, April focused on technology. By incorporating screen readers into the training curriculum, she taught students how to use them to navigate the computer which would help them in their jobs.

April Becomes A VIT

In 1989, April accepted a position as a Vision Itinerant Teacher (VIT) and a classroom teacher for the Nassau Board of Cooperative Educational Services. The program offered special education services to the different districts in Nassau County. April was there for twenty-four years until she retired. April said, “It was a great job, and I loved it.”

Volunteering

Following her retirement, April worked as a volunteer for Lighthouse International’s Saturday Youth Skills Program. April assisted with providing social and recreational services to legally blind children aged 6 to 13, focusing on helping them build self-confidence.

History of Services

April says, “When first moving to Manhattan in 1976, I used the Reading Services available at Lighthouse International, and I still use Lighthouse Guild’s services today.” April said, “Once I realized I was on the edge of functional vision, I reached out to the New York State Commission for the Blind. They reconnected me with Lighthouse Guild to access their low vision and rehabilitation services.”

Low Vision Services

April was a patient of former Lighthouse Guild Chief of Low Vision Services, Dr. Bruce Rosenthal, who retired in May 2023. When speaking about Dr. Rosenthal, April says, “He was very well-informed and thorough and provided an excellent low vision examination. I was a patient of his for many years. Dr. Rosenthal was on top of all the modern technology available for visually impaired people, and he was a dedicated physician and was always very helpful.”

Daily Living Skills

After retiring from VIT, developing cataracts and her vision worsening, April contacted Lighthouse Guild for vision rehabilitation training to update her skills. April said, “Vision Rehabilitation Therapist Lilly Harris came to my home, and she taught me some very valuable things like reorganizing my sheets and towels, how to clean various areas of my kitchen such as the stove and the microwave, and tips when cooking. She helped me [become] more secure about using the gas stove, and now I am cooking more.” April concludes, “Lilly was very helpful and very pleasant, and she gave me some valuable advice, and I still use the techniques she offered me.”

Mobility Training

April said, “Diane Formosa, Communication Skills Instructor at Lighthouse Guild, gave me orientation and mobility lessons on how to use the white cane. She taught me how to navigate with the white cane from the 10 to 2 o’clock positions, move with the correct foot and cane coordination, and feel safer when doing so. She also taught me how to navigate in and out of the subway, approach the bus stop, and cross the street safely.” April continues, “She also taught me how to use my hearing more since my vision has lessened [and] helped me twice when I needed to change my methods due to my continuation of vision loss, and I feel more safe and secure in my travels.”

Why Lighthouse Guild?

April says, “The Vision Rehabilitation Services at Lighthouse Guild are essential, along with the Daily Living Skills, Mobility Training Programs, and the Reading Services. These programs have helped me develop independence and self-reliance. Based on my experience, I recommend anyone with a vision impairment go to Lighthouse Guild.”

“I am currently receiving training from the Lighthouse Guild’s Tech Pals Program to improve my skills when using my iPhone.” April shares. “I look forward to continuing with mobility skills training and taking advantage of other services as needed.”

To learn more about April and her amazing journey, visit our [website](#).

Future Professionals in the House!

With the help of their Job Coach, participants of the Lighthouse Guild Summer **Pathways Program** interned as ambassadors in our Manhattan lobby greeting guests and providing information about the organization.



Photos: Left to right, Job Coach Adrian, Ambassadors Danielle, Freddy and Xavier; Danielle and Freddy stand to greet guests as they enter the Lighthouse Guild lobby.

Illuminating the Power of Service

Lighthouse Guild and our Board of Directors were thrilled to honor the numerous individual volunteers, and corporate and community partners, who give so generously of themselves to support our mission at **The Stephen T. Pearlman Volunteer Center** Recognition Celebration. The evening was awash with many examples of service recounted throughout the night that told a wonderful story about the power of volunteers and how they inspire us every day.

We were pleased to recognize some truly inspiring individuals with Excellence in Service Awards to William Graham, Gina Robertson, Food Bank NYC, Josh Berger and Elaine Peacock. We also acknowledged volunteers who were celebrating their milestone years of service.



Photos: Left to right, Gina Robertson and Chief Volunteer Officer Cheryl Pemberton-Graves; President and CEO Dr. Calvin Roberts and William Graham.



Photos: Left to right, Dr. Calvin Roberts and Josh Berger; Elaine Peacock and Communications Skills Teacher Audrey Schading; Illeana Hernandez of Food Bank NYC and Cheryl Pemberton-Graves.

We owe Lighthouse Guild’s success to the dedication of many volunteers and are grateful for all they do to help people with vision impairment live the lives they aspire to. We have a wealth of volunteer opportunities that range from serving on leadership committees and donating professional expertise to reading services; and to lending a hand on community field trips for teens in our youth programs. Check out our [website](#) to learn more.

Are Robotic Guide Dogs Possible?

The white cane and guide dog are long-established tools used by people with vision impairment to navigate. Researchers are now working on robotic technologies that use sophisticated computer learning systems to augment the traditional white cane or replicate many of the same functions of a guide dog. In our latest **On Tech and Vision** podcast episode: **Robotic Guidance Technology**.

I speak to Kaio Ribeiro of Vix Labs in Brazil, where they are developing **LYSA**, a small suitcase-shaped machine that sits on two wheels and is pushed by the user. LYSA could someday be a promising alternative for people who either don’t have access to guide dogs or aren’t interested in having one. In a similar vein, Dr. Cang Ye and his team at Virginia Commonwealth University are developing a robotic white cane that augments the familiar white cane experience for people with vision loss. Like the LYSA, the **robotic white cane** has a sophisticated computer learning system that allows it to identify obstacles and help the user navigate around them, using a roller tip at its base. We are also joined by **Thomas Panek**, President and CEO of Guiding Eyes for the Blind, who provides he perspective on guide dogs and the emerging technology of robotics.



Illustration: A human hand that transforms into linear grids from the knuckles to the fingertips touches a mechanical drawing of a robotic dog.

International Educational Exchange

We were pleased to host representatives from the Korea Blind Union (KBU) for a tour of our facilities and to discuss building comprehensive rehabilitation and workforce transition services for people who are visually impaired in Korea.



Photo: Professor Lee, Chief Technology Officer Dr. Bryan Wolynski, Mr. Hong, Chief Operating Officer Paul Misiti, KBU President Kim, Chief Program and Services Officer Maura Sweeney and Dr. Park.

Events

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

Wednesday, August 16 - Workshop & Panel Discussion on Accessing Entertainment Media for People with Vision Loss

Sunday, August 27 - Blind Baseball Clinic and Picnic

Though Disability Pride Month is coming to a close, we still need to promote inclusivity, raise awareness of disability rights and challenges, and celebrate the diverse contributions and achievements of people with disabilities throughout the year. Please help us continue the momentum. **Donate, volunteer, refer** people who can benefit from our services, or spread the word on **X (formerly Twitter)** and **Facebook**.

Be well and stay safe,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Calvin Roberts, MD".

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

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Volunteer: lighthouseguild.org/volunteer/
Share: Twitter @lighthousegld | Facebook @lighthouseguild



**Lighthouse
Guild**

Dedicated to providing exceptional services that inspire people who are visually impaired to attain their goals.
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