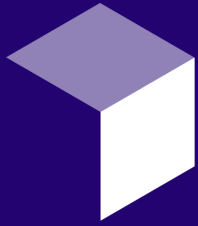


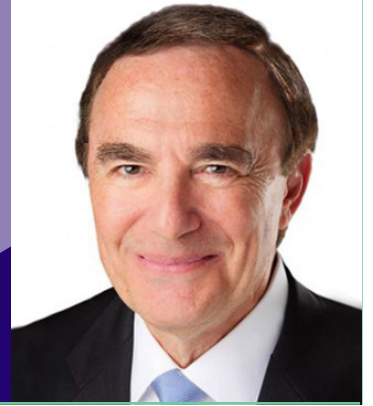
March 2023



# Lighthouse Guild

## Lighthouse Guild In Brief

From Dr. Cal Roberts, President and CEO



Dear Friends,

### Focusing on Social Workers

**March is National Social Work Month** a time to recognize social workers for their valuable contributions to our society. A guiding social work core value is “to meet the client where they’re at.” Social workers address urgent and chronic life issues, making sure people can get to their appointments, get their medications and medical equipment, and move forward towards personal goals. They also provide psychotherapy.

At Lighthouse Guild, our social workers serve in many different roles: as psychotherapists at our Behavioral Health clinic, where they provide individual, couple, family, and group therapy; at our Health Center, providing support groups that help patients and families cope with vision loss and challenges in their everyday lives; at our GuildCare Adult Day Health Care program, assessing and monitoring the bio-psycho-social needs of each client, throughout the day and at our Rehabilitation Services, providing emotional support and guidance to individuals seeking education and work as they establish and pursue their goals.



Photo from left to right: A social worker holding a notebook listening to an older client during a support group session.

Social workers and other providers of behavioral services play an active role in helping patients adjust to vision loss. One of our clients, Julie, shares about her experience. “The social work team at Lighthouse Guild are unbelievably good at their work, and they have been an enormous help to me,” she says. “Whether it’s helping me with Access-A-Ride, finding an appropriate library to access, or simply the little things, you know they will be there for you, and that is a great comfort to me.” Another client, Yasmin, participated in a support group for parents with low vision lead by Social Worker Tamara Greeley. “I liked that we were all parents and it made me feel like I was not alone, and they understood what it was like to be a low vision parent and the challenges that come with that,” Yasmin says. “The help of the group, the friends I made, and Tamara was so supportive and encouraging [for me] to keep going.”

To learn more about the roles of social workers, visit our [website](#). If you are a social worker and want to learn more about vision loss and its effect on your patients, check this article [Understanding Vision Loss What Social Workers Need to Know](#).

### A Visionary Evening

On February 28, we held Lighthouse Guild’s annual gala: “A Visionary Evening.” I was pleased to present the Visionary Award to **Jacqueline Weld Drake** and **James R. Borynack** for their philanthropic vision and community spirit. We also announced that 2022’s Honoree Jennifer Fischer will step into the role of Lighthouse Guild’s International Ambassador.

The evening included a record number of guests and proceeds will support our programs and services that help people who are blind or visually impaired to live the lives they aspire to.



Photo: From left to right, Dr. Calvin Roberts, James Borynack, Jacqueline Weld Drake and Lighthouse Guild Board Chairman James Dubin



Photos: From left to right, Frannie Scaife, Marc Rosen and Catherine Adler; Andrea Roberts and Sydney Delcontivo

The highlight of the evening for me was when Sydney, a participant in Lighthouse Guild’s Tele-Support Program, shared how she has made friends and grown with Lighthouse Guild’s support. She plans to pursue a law degree and sports management. I was grateful to hear her story, and to see her parents’ pride as they watched her speech. For more about this inspirational evening and to see more photos visit our [website](#).

**Julie Gets Her Life Back**

Julie is an 86-year-old New Yorker. She is also the mother of a 46-year-old son and feels she has had a good life. Julie has undergone bilateral cataract surgery and has been diagnosed with Glaucoma and Macular Degeneration.

Julie loves music and, before her vision impairment, frequently attended the old Metropolitan Opera and still loves to go to Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center.

“Anyone with a vision impairment can benefit from the services provided at Lighthouse Guild,”

—Dr. Lisa Ostrin

A portrait of Julie, an elderly woman with short white hair, wearing glasses, a pink turtleneck, and a grey jacket. She is looking directly at the camera with a gentle smile.

Photo: A quote, “Anyone with a vision impairment can benefit from the services provided at Lighthouse Guild,” next to a portrait of Julie.



Julie considers herself a devoted reader, and before losing her vision, she would read one to two books a week. She worked at Mount Sinai Hospital for about fifteen years, followed by thirty-five years at the Hospital for Special Surgery (HSS) at Weill Cornell Medical College. In 2016 at the age of 79, she began to lose her vision, and once she realized she could no longer read, Julie made the difficult decision to retire.

### **Connecting with Lighthouse Guild**

She first reached out to Lighthouse Guild at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, when she was searching for a place where she could access large print books. She was connected to Dr. Laura Sperazza, Director of Vision Rehabilitation. “I find Dr. Sperazza to be a wonderful doctor, and she is always very helpful, informative, and answers all of my questions,” she says.

Julie credits Dr. Sperazza with connecting her with the right programs and services at Lighthouse Guild that have been extremely helpful to her. Julie says, “The staff who manages the programs and services are the ones that help you with the day-to-day aids that you might need to survive.” Julie was provided glasses that helped her to see well enough when she would hold something close to her face, and magnifying glasses that helped a lot. Dr. Sperazza arranged for Julie to meet with Occupational Therapist Inna Babaeva, who helped her choose a lamp that improved the lighting conditions for reading. She has also showed Julie some of the available technologies that can be helpful.

### **A Major Support**

Julie says, “One of the great programs is the Macular Degeneration support group which I have benefited from tremendously at Lighthouse Guild. The support group has helped me a great deal in accepting, managing, and dealing with my vision loss.”

It was through the support group that Julie met Social Workers Jocelyn Tapia and Jill Zisman. Julie shares, “Jocelyn and the social work team at Lighthouse Guild are unbelievably good at their work. When I need support, no matter what that is, they give it to me.”

Julie speaks with Jill every two weeks and finds her a considerable help. She explains, “For example, Jill finds all these things for me that I can’t find because I am visually impaired. She found out about a lecture and an exhibit for people who are visually impaired at the Museum of Modern Art and shared the information with me. If not for Jill searching for that information and sharing it with me, I wouldn’t have known about it and wouldn’t have gotten that experience. She handles everything well, and she is very supportive. I can’t thank them enough, and it’s unbelievable what they do.”

### **Technology**

Julie says she is looking forward to her upcoming appointment to visit the Lighthouse Guild Technology Center to learn more about the different apps available for her smartphone.

### **Julie’s Recommendation**

Julie says, “Anyone with a vision impairment can benefit from the services provided at Lighthouse Guild. All the staff there are so helpful, from the doctors, optometrists, social workers — they are all terrific, and all your questions get answered.” Julie continues, “Lighthouse Guild has staff to help you with all your needs to make life bearable — from new technology tips, to how to better prepare food, to how to manage depth perception when stepping off a sidewalk and onto the street,” Julie concludes, “Before going to Lighthouse Guild, I felt as if my life was falling apart, and I literally could not function. They have given me back my life. To me, the whole place is wonderful.”

Learn more about Julie by visiting our [website](#).

## **Music Tech Shines the Spotlight on Musicians with Vision Loss**

Marcus Roberts, Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles, and even Louis Braille (who invented the Braille Music Notation system still used today) prove that musicians who are blind or visually impaired have profoundly impacted our musical landscape. Yet, to get their work to us, they have had to structure complex workarounds, like relying on sighted musicians to demonstrate complex scores; memorization; or only performing when they can have a Braille score in front of them, shutting them out from opportunities that fall to those who can sight read. Fortunately, music technologies are making composition, nuanced scoring, and Braille printing easier than ever, bringing musicians and composers who are blind to center stage to share their sound and song.

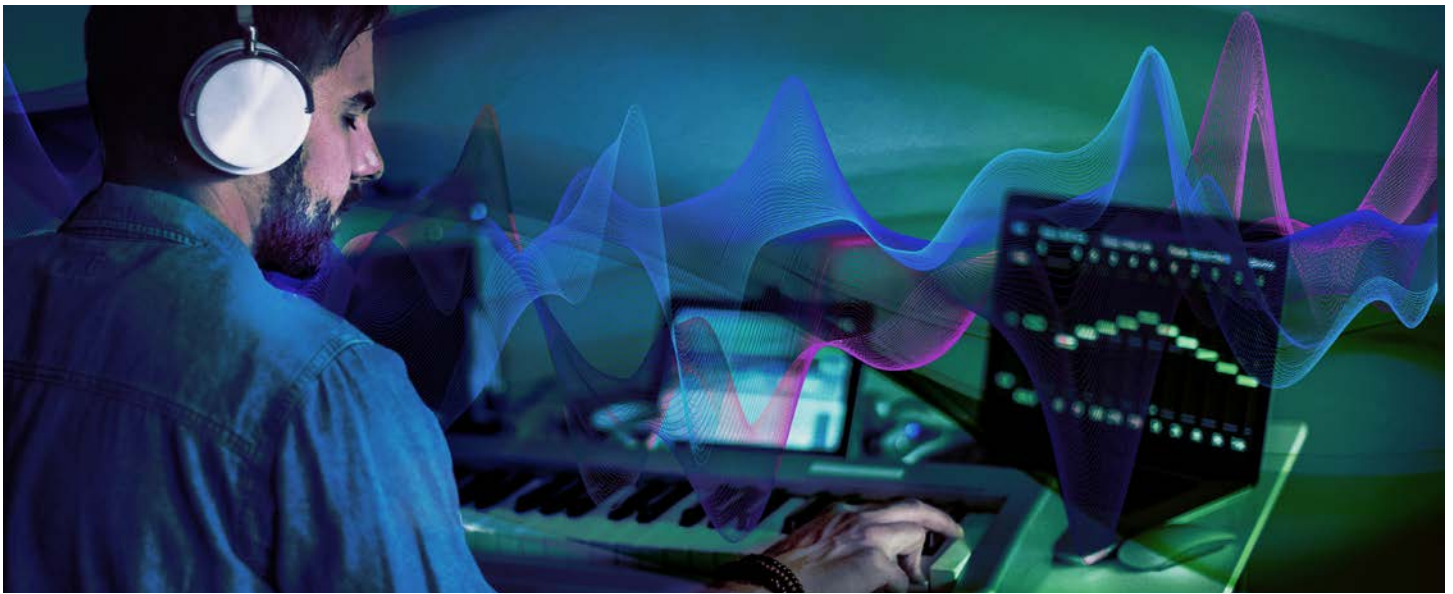


Photo: A man wearing headphones is seated in front of computers using music software while waves of color simulating sound radiate around him.

In the latest episode of our podcast, **On Tech & Vision**, I speak with Bill McCann, the founder and president of Dancing Dots Braille Music Notation software. Dancing Dots software — plus educational resources and training — helps people who are blind to read, write and record their music. Musicians James Risdon and Chris Cooke share about using music technologies to compose and arrange music. Join us as we focus on the current tech and future possibilities that will someday offer musicians with vision impairment complete parity with their sighted peers.

**There is Still Time to Join Team Lighthouse Guild!**

On **Sunday, May 7, 2023**, Lighthouse Guild will participate as one of the charity partners in the **TD Five Boro Bike Tour** — one of New York City’s iconic athletic events. **Join Team Lighthouse Guild** 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 of and funds for Lighthouse Guild programs and services 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!

**Dr. César A. Alfonso Elected President of WFP**

We are pleased to announce Chief Psychiatrist of Lighthouse Guild’s Behavior Health Services, Dr. César A. Alfonso, has been elected President of the World Federation for Psychotherapy (WFP). A global organization founded in 1934, WFP promotes the development of psychotherapy in practice, teaching, and research and encourages and supports appropriate standards in the practice of psychotherapy.

**Dr. César A. Alfonso,  
Chief Psychiatrist**

A professional headshot of Dr. César A. Alfonso. He is a middle-aged man with short grey hair and a well-groomed grey beard and mustache. He is wearing a dark blue suit jacket over a light blue dress shirt and a patterned tie. He is smiling slightly at the camera. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Photo: “Dr. César A. Alfonso, Chief Psychiatrist,” next to a portrait of Dr. Alfonso.

Dr. Alfonso is also Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia University, Adjunct Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Indonesia, Visiting Professor of Psychiatry at the National University of Malaysia and Prince of Songkla University in Thailand, and a psychotherapy supervisor at Northwell Health. His expertise is in the clinical care of the medically ill, psychopharmacology, and multimodal psychotherapy.

We are grateful that Dr. Alfonso is part of the Lighthouse Guild family. Lighthouse Guild’s Dorothy Strelsin Behavioral Health Clinic is the only behavioral health center in the United States focused on people who are blind, visually impaired, or at risk for vision loss. To learn more, visit our **website**.

## Tech Pals: A Perfect Match

Since its beginning, last spring, our Technology Peers for Accessible Living (Tech Pals) program has been a great success. The program, generously funded by Reader’s Digest Partners for Sight Foundation, matches young adults who are visually impaired aged 18-24 to serve as technology mentors to adults who are at least 55 years old and also dealing with vision loss. The tech mentors help the older adults become proficient in using mobile phones and tablets while the mentees learn the skills needed to seek positions in the tech support field. Soon we will begin phase three of the program with the mentors participating in community-based internships.



Photo: Tech Pals participant Anne receiving instruction about her smartphone by her tech mentor Leslie.

Director of Rehabilitation Judy Katzen says, “Both the mentors and mentees have all enjoyed the intergenerational aspect of the program.” One mentor, Leslie, a college student who feels her vision challenges make her sensitive to those of her mentee, was matched with Anne, a mentee who considers herself tech-savvy for someone her age but was overwhelmed when she purchased a new smartphone last fall. “I had a challenge, and Leslie had the tools to help,” Anne shares. “I felt comfortable with her immediately.”

Read more about Anne and Leslie’s experience with **Tech Pals** and learn more about the program by visiting our **website**.

With your help, Lighthouse Guild can provide the support people who are blind or visually impaired need to get their lives back. Please consider **donating, volunteering, referring** people who can benefit from our services, and spreading the word on **Twitter** and **Facebook**!

Be well and stay safe,

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

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