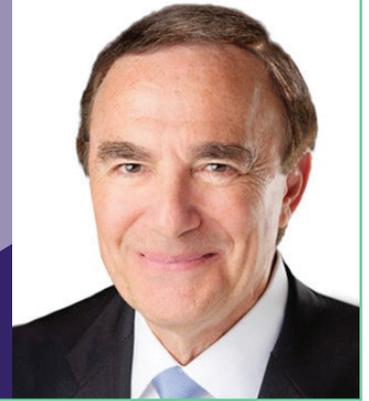




Lighthouse Guild

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



Dear Friends,

February is Low Vision Awareness Month

Low vision, which affects millions of Americans, can make it difficult to do everyday activities such as reading, shopping, cooking, or writing. That doesn't mean an end to independence: with the right technology and vision rehabilitation, people can attain their goals.

"The most important thing you can do for your eyes is to get a comprehensive eye exam," says our Dr. Andrea Zimmerman, a low vision specialist. The three main causes of low vision and blindness in the United States are glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration (AMD), and diabetic eye disease. Only a thorough exam can detect these diseases in their early stages.

While low vision can't be corrected by regular eyeglasses, contact lenses, medications, or surgery, new technologies and rehabilitation can make life easier and more rewarding. Lighthouse Guild offers some practical tips for people who are experiencing low vision:

- Use contrast to distinguish items, such as a light cutting board on a dark countertop.
- Use night lights, a flashlight, or hall or room lighting if you get up during the night.
- Use shades on light sources to reduce glare.
- Embrace technology! Video magnifiers, audio and electronic books, smartphones, and tablets enable you to change the font size and lighting level of magnify. Smartphone apps can help you identify money, colors, and navigate your surroundings.

For more tips, visit our [website](#). And check out the [optometry and eye exams page](#) and hear Dr. Zimmerman explain what a low vision exam is.

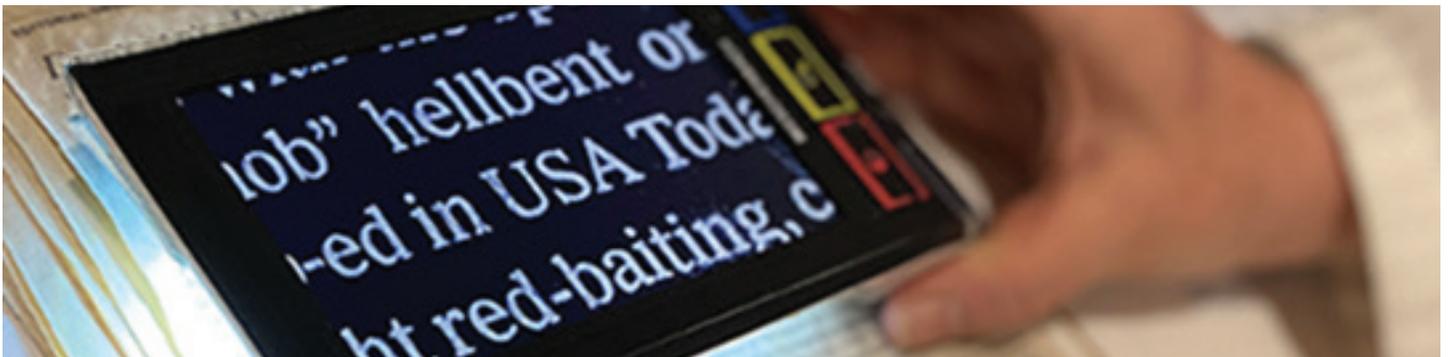


Photo: Digital hand magnifier scanning a newspaper, one of the many tech solutions to help people with low vision.

A Visionary Evening

On February 20, we held Lighthouse Guild's annual gala: "A Visionary Evening." I was pleased to present the Visionary Award to the Honorable David Fischer and Jennifer Fischer for their numerous accomplishments and support of Lighthouse Guild's mission. The evening was a record-breaking success and proceeds will support our programs and services that help people who are blind or visually impaired to live the lives they aspire to. For more about this inspirational evening and to see more photos visit our [website](#).



Photo left to right: 2022 Visionary honorees David and Jennifer Fisher; Beth Rudin DeWoody and event chair and 2019 Visionary honoree Thomas C. Quick.

Understanding and Addressing Vision Loss

As the population ages, vision loss will become increasingly prevalent. If you are a social worker caring for older adults and those with special needs, you may have clients who have vision issues. Through Lighthouse Guild's **Understanding and Addressing Vision Loss** program, you can help your clients. Our two-hour online program enables you to learn at your own pace and provides you with: An understanding of vision loss and its impact, strategies to help clients address their loss, and how to access vision rehabilitation services. For more information about this program and others or to register, visit the eLearning section of our [website](#).



Photo left to right: An older woman wearing glasses facing a woman who is smiling and using a computer.

Margarita Makes the Grade

Margarita had awakened from sleep when she saw a spider. “Really big.” It started to crawl down the wall. She stared in horror as it continued towards her. “Coming down, coming down, coming down.” It stopped on her belly. She screamed.

The spider wasn't real, but a hallucination, a symptom of a condition called Charles Bonnet syndrome. It was diagnosed in 2016. As if that weren't enough, Margarita was born with Nystagmus, a vision condition that causes rapid, uncontrolled eye movements. She also has photophobia, a painful sensitivity to the sun and bright indoor light, and cataracts.

“I was never like other children,” she says. “I never played with a ball. I went to school late.” She was bullied. “People were laughing at me because my eyes moved around, and that made me a shy person. This problem still makes me feel nervous, anxious, but I continue. I never give up.”



Photo left to right: Daniela Abreu, NYSCB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor; Theresa Chinheya, Lighthouse Guild Academic Instructor; Margarita proudly holding her diploma; Gabriella Oldham, Lighthouse Guild Academic Instructor; and Jacque Suh, Lighthouse Guild Senior Academic Instructor.

Not only did she not give up, she pursued her dream. Margarita wanted to get her high school equivalency degree so she could attend college and become a teacher. This month, with the help of Lighthouse Guild's education program instructors, she started to make her lifelong dream a reality. She passed five required tests and was awarded her High School Equivalency Diploma by the New York State Education Department. It was the culmination of two years of study. We hosted a graduation ceremony in Margarita's honor earlier this month, which her family, her New York State Commission for the Blind counselor, and Lighthouse Guild's academic staff attended. It was the first graduation of this kind, and we are looking forward to hosting more! To see highlights of this very special ceremony and learn more about our academic and career services, visit our [website](#).

Before she started working toward her high school equivalency degree, Lighthouse Guild had trained Margarita on devices that would give her more control over her life. Our organization, says Margarita, is “the best place I’ve ever seen because you can find everything you need here. You can find equipment, you can get your medication, you can find doctors. This is an amazing place. I can say when finding Lighthouse Guild, I found myself.”

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Advocacy Leaders Needed!

Are you a recent college or university graduate or senior looking to make a difference? Lighthouse Guild Fellowship in Law and Public Policy is seeking future leaders as advocates to inspire people who visually impaired to attain their goals. Lighthouse Guild Fellows will help shape the focus of our organization and engage in hands-on advocacy and government relations efforts to influence policy on issues related to our mission. To qualify, you need to be a senior or recent graduate of an accredited four-year college or university; In good academic standing with an overall G.P.A. of 3.0 or equivalent; Available full-time (40 hours per week) for at least one year starting in August – September of 2022 and a U.S. citizen or legal resident. Those interested should submit a cover letter, resume and personal statement to employment@lighthouseguild.org.

Can Audio Activate the Brain’s Visual Cortex?

In the latest episode of “**On Tech & Vision with Dr. Cal Roberts,**” we explore how, through sensory substitution, audio feedback can in some cases stimulate a user’s visual cortex, allowing a user to – without sight – achieve something close to visual perception. I speak with Peter Meijer, the creator of The vOICe, an experimental technology that converts visual information into sound and has been shown to activate users’ visual cortices. We also hear from Erik Weihenmayer, a world-class mountain climber and kayaker who lost his vision due to retinoschisis. He brings us to the summit of Everest by describing what it sounds like.

You can be a visionary and help people like Margarita realize their dreams! Please consider supporting our mission by **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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Dedicated to providing exceptional services that inspire people who are visually impaired to attain their goals.
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