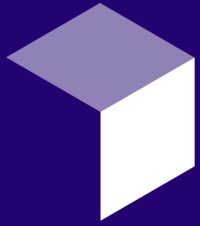
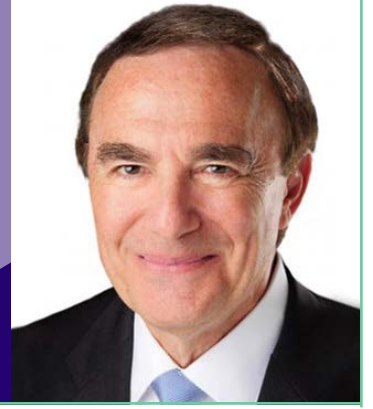


August 2024



Lighthouse Guild

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



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Dear Friends,

Back-to-School Eye Health Essentials

August is **Children's Eye Health and Safety Month**, a perfect time to prioritize your child's vision health as they prepare for the new school year. "The most important thing you can do to protect your child's vision is to make sure they get an eye exam," says Dr. Laura Sperazza, Director of Vision Rehabilitation Services at Lighthouse Guild.



Photo: In the foreground, a young boy wearing glasses and a backpack, with a group of male and female students seated in the background, appearing out of focus.

In addition to eye exams, Lighthouse Guild advises fostering healthy habits such as:

- A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and fish.
- Combat eye strain from digital screens by following the 20-20-20 rule: take a 20-second break to look at something 20 feet away every 20 minutes.
- Wear proper safety gear during sports and activities to prevent eye injury.

For more tips to help safeguard your child's eye health during back-to-school season and throughout the year, visit our [website](#). You can also schedule an appointment for an eye exam with one of our [vision experts](#).

Focusing on a Future Career

World Class Experience

Our **Summer Pathways to Work Program** arms young people who are visually impaired with the skills, tools and practical experience needed to succeed in the world of work. This summer, our young professionals took a one-of-a-kind tour at the United Nations, hosted by the UN's Operations Team and **CulinArt**, a world-class culinary group and the UN's food service provider. In addition to visiting the storied halls of this international landmark, the teens got a behind-the-scenes look at the various cafés, cafeterias and kitchens all throughout the facility, including the well-known Café Vienna and Café de la Paix. To top it all off, CulinArt welcomed our teens into their on-site Training Kitchen, where everyone made their own pizzas, led by two of the UN's chefs. What a day! We often call our young professionals "Ambassadors," but now that term has a whole new meaning!



Photos: Left to right, a young man making a pizza; A chef assists a young woman with her pizza while two other young women work on their pizzas.



Photo: Pathways to Work Program participants, Lighthouse Guild staff and CulinArt staff pose together in the Teaching Kitchen.

Many thanks to our partners CulinArt, the United Nations and **Educational Vision Services**, for making this day possible for our young people!

Transformative Workshop

Morgan Stanley's **Enable Employee Network** hosted a career workshop and exchange for twelve young people who are visually impaired from Lighthouse Guild's Youth Services, Tech Pals and Scholarship programs. The insightful event featured a panel discussion with Morgan Stanley employees who are also visually impaired. They captivated the group by sharing their personal and professional journeys. Participants also learned about the firm's Accessibility Center of Excellence which supports accessible technologies across the firm. Lighthouse Guild's young clients also took part in a networking activity designed to enhance their personal brand and were given a tour of the Morgan Stanley Trading Floor! The future professionals left the event energized with enhanced resources and confidence for their careers. Read more about this transformative event on [website](#).



Photo: Participants from Lighthouse Guild's Youth Services, Tech Pals and Scholarship program along with Lighthouse Guild and Morgan Stanley staff pose in the lobby of the Morgan Stanley offices.

Accessible Voting: A Fundamental Right for All!

Every voter's right to independent and accessible voting is fundamental to our democracy. With the 2024 presidential election approaching, Lighthouse Guild collaborated with the New York City Board of Elections (BOE) for a workshop and demonstration on accessible voting machines, step-by-step voting tips, and the absentee ballot process for people who are blind or visually impaired. Attendees had the opportunity to ask questions, try the accessible ballot marking machines and learn about the accessibility features available at all polling locations to make their voting experience more inclusive, private, and efficient.



Photos: Left to right, New York City Board of Elections ADA Coordinator Ariel Merkel, Lighthouse Guild President and CEO Dr. Calvin Roberts, Chief Volunteer Officer Cheryl Pemberton-Graves and volunteer Shanell Matos; An event participant tries the ballot marking machine.

Participants also had the chance to connect with a dedicated BOE staff member who assisted with checking voter status, registering first-time voters, offering polling information, providing accessible remote voting options, and sharing valuable voting tips.

Check out our [website](#) for additional voting tips and resources.

Amanda Moves Forward

Amanda was 17 and in the 10th grade of high school when she started experiencing flashes and blurriness in her vision. Initial medical tests found no issues with her eyes. However, later tests revealed a buildup of fluid in her lungs and behind the discs of her eyes, leading to swelling and pressure on her eyes. She was then diagnosed with Hyperactive Eosinophilia Syndrome and underwent a craniotomy to create necessary space for her brain. Unfortunately, this left her with tunnel vision in her left eye and blurriness in her right eye.

Amanda continued to experience vision issues and was hospitalized while the medical team conducted tests to diagnose and treat her condition. She was diagnosed with Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension, which required a catheter to be inserted into her head to drain and prevent fluid buildup behind her eyes.

While she was in the hospital, she was forced to miss school. At the time, her high school failed to forward the necessary transcripts and Amanda couldn't enroll as a student in the hospital education program. Frustrated by this and by the difficulty of managing her medical condition, Amanda made the tough choice to drop out of high school.

The Journey Towards a Diploma

The trauma of losing her vision was difficult for Amanda to grasp, causing her to feel depressed. "After living my life with perfect vision, and then to suddenly lose it, that has been difficult for me to accept and to manage," said Amanda. As time passed, Amanda felt disappointed that she had to leave school before getting her diploma. So, she decided to start preparing for the Graduate Equivalency Degree (GED) examination.

New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) connected Amanda with the Catholic Guild for the Blind, where she did well on the academic assessment and began receiving training services until it closed. Before its closing, they connected Amanda with Lighthouse Guild's Academic Program Senior Academic Instructor, Jacqueline Suh. When thinking back about Jacqueline's assistance during that time, Amanda said, "I was nervous ... until my first interaction with Jacqueline. Jacqueline explained that I would be studying with other students just like me. She made me feel like I was home, and I knew immediately that I was in the right place. Jacqueline made me feel like I actually belonged with Lighthouse Guild."

Amanda has done exceptionally well since coming to Lighthouse Guild, passing the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) Reading and Writing and GED Social Studies and Science exams. Amanda said, “Once I found out I passed those subjects, I was prouder of myself than I’ve ever been. I did something for myself that I never thought I could do. I actually cried when I received my results.” The only subject remaining for Amanda to pass is Math. Once doing so, she will be prepared to take the GED exam in September or October 2024.

“I knew immediately that I was in the right place.”

—Amanda



Photos: A quote, “I knew immediately that I was in the right place,” next to a portrait of Amanda.

Supportive Staff

Amanda said, “I have so much respect for Jacqueline because she’s been there for me since the beginning. She knows what I’ve gone through on my journey, and she provided me with the encouragement I needed to go back to school. I could not have accomplished this without her assistance.”

Academic Instructor Gabriella Oldham prepared Amanda for the Reading, Writing, Science, and Social Studies skills. Amanda said, “Gabriella inspired me to do better for myself ... She kept me focused and determined, and she never allowed me to lose sight of what was important.” Academic Instructor Theresa Chinheya is Amanda’s Math instructor. When reflecting on Theresa’s assistance, Amanda said, “Theresa has been by far the best Math teacher I’ve ever encountered ... She takes the time to teach you, she does not rush you, and she makes sure you have mastered the current lesson before moving on to another.”

Mobility and Vision Rehabilitation

While preparing for the GED, Amanda received other Lighthouse Guild services. Orientation & Mobility and Vision Rehabilitation Therapist Jeffrey Ambury came to Amanda’s home and provided her with mobility training — teaching her how to effectively use the white cane, how to safely go up and down stairs, and helping her to become more familiar and comfortable when walking around in her neighborhood. He also provided her with an extensive list of devices, including a small telescope, lamp, contrast glasses, a cutting board with contrast, and magnifying glasses. Amanda said, “I was very happy I had someone like Jeffrey to work with. He was very patient with me, and he also showed my husband how to accommodate and navigate a visually impaired person safely. Jeffrey gave me a greater sense of independence.”

Amanda’s Advice

Amanda shares, “When living with a disability, although it can cause you to feel depressed and hopeless at various times in your life, it’s important to know that your disability does not have to define you as a person, and it does not make you any less of a person. If ever feeling the opposite, remember not to allow your disability to get in the way of making the most out of the abilities that you do have. It’s important that we look forward and that we find new things that we can do to help make us feel positive about ourselves and things that allow us to feel happy and know we have a purpose.

Read more about Amanda’s journey forward on our [website](#).

Tele-Support Groups for All Ages and Needs

Our Tele-Support program is designed to connect individuals nationwide, providing a platform to share your feelings, frustrations, and experiences. In these supportive groups, you can receive valuable advice on coping with vision loss, learn about assistive technology, access resources, and collaborate to find solutions to the obstacles you may face. We provide support for **Teens, Young Adults, Adults** with vision loss as well as their **Partners**. We also provide support for **Parents** of children with vision loss or **Parents** who are experiencing vision loss themselves.



Photos: Left to right, and older woman wearing glasses listening on her phone; A little boy wearing glasses gives his mother, who is also wearing glasses, a kiss; A young man wearing glasses and ear buds talking on his iPhone.

Another virtual resource for parents, is our **Ask the Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI)** program which provides information on topics related to children's vision loss, development, early intervention, advocacy, Individualized Education Program (IEP)s, transitions and more.

Update: Moving Towards Accessible Transportation

About a year ago, we reported on the **Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA)**'s implementation of wayfinding features for customers with disabilities. One of the many innovative solutions that was employed was the **NaviLens** guidance system. NaviLens and **NaviLens GO** are free smartphone apps that translate visual information into accessible formats. When you scan a NaviLens code in a subway station or at a bus stop, the app will read out information like train or bus arrival times, real-time elevator status, and information about in-station features. The codes also guide the user to their locations. Lighthouse Guild was the first U.S. organization to test this technology and we were thrilled the MTA is utilizing this innovation along with the rest of the accessibility solutions.

We are pleased to share that 400 NaviLens codes are now installed in the following subway stations and along the entire **M66** bus route:

- 72 Street: **1, 2, 3 trains**
- 66 Street - Lincoln Center: **1 train**
- 50 Street: **1 train**
- 28 Street: **1 train**
- 23 Street: **1 train**
- 23 Street: **C, E trains**
- 18 Street: **1 train**
- 14 Street: **A, C, E trains**
- 8 Avenue: **L train**
- Christopher Street - Stonewall: **1 train**
- Houston Street: **1 train**

The MTA continues to add NaviLens to more stations. For more information on future stations and other accessible transportation options for riders such as accessible boarding areas, free smartphone apps, and tactile braille maps, or to provide feedback to the MTA, visit the **MTA website**.

Corporate Volunteers Making a Difference

During this year's **KPMG** corporate volunteer event, volunteers expanded our ability to provide technology training and an engaging social event for people who are blind or visually impaired.

After receiving training in the multi-functional app SeeingAI, designed to aid those who are blind or visually impaired, the KPMG volunteers worked individually with Lighthouse Guild clients. Under the supervision of Chief Technology Officer Dr. Bryan Wolynski, the volunteers helped our clients master crucial functions, enabling them to attain their goals.

KPMG volunteers also teamed up with our staff to host a Casino Game Day event for clients at our Manhattan **GuildCare Adult Day Health Care** program. The volunteers helped create a memorable experience, offering a range of activities designed to engage clients physically, mentally, and creatively. From casino-style games to music and prizes, everyone enjoyed a fantastic day of fun and connection.



Photos: Left to right, GuildCare clients play a casino game around a table led by two KPMG volunteers; An older man with glasses holding his iPhone poses next to a KPMG volunteer who is assisting him with his iPad. Behind the two men is a table with seated KPMG volunteers helping Lighthouse Guild clients.

Whether it is through corporate volunteer opportunities, leadership committees, reading services, or assisting at events and programs, you can make a world of difference in the lives of so many. Check out our website to learn more.

Accessing Entertainment Media and Connecting to the Community

We were excited to host our second **Accessible Entertainment Media and Community Discussion** event with two highly informative sessions for people who are blind or visually impaired.

The first session was a workshop about Xumo, Spectrum's new streaming device for accessing recorded content. The workshop was presented by Petr Kucheryavyy, Senior Manager of Outreach, Communications, Learning, and Development, and the product owner of the Spectrum Access app for Spectrum's Accessibility team.



Photo: Panel of experts, from left to right, Andre "Doctor Dre" Brown, Jahron Black, Rasheta Bunting, Thomas Reid, Petr Kucheryavyy and panel moderator Kiana Glanton, Lighthouse Guild Development and Special Projects Manager.

Following the workshop was a highly anticipated panel discussion with leaders from hip-hop entertainment, audio engineering, special education, advocacy, accessible sports, and podcasting. We would like to express our gratitude to our distinguished panelists: Petr Kucheryavyy; Andre "Doctor Dre" Brown, a versatile hip-hop artist and educator; Jahron Black, a lyricist, audio engineer, producer, president of the New York Association of Blind Athletes, and goalball player; Rasheta Bunting, a special educator, civic engagement organizer, entrepreneur, and disability advocate; and Thomas Reid, host and producer of Reid My Mind Radio, a freelance narrator, and film consultant.

We also extend our thanks to **Spectrum Charter Communications** for their support and collaboration. If you missed either session, don't worry! You can "Watch the Replay" on the **event page**.

Final Call for The Tempest

There is still time to enjoy **The Tempest: A Surround Sound Odyssey**! Exclusive access is available until August 31. Visit our **website** to register and experience this immersive audio experience for free.

Events

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

September 11 | Tech In-Session: AIRA – Access to Information through Remote Assistance | New York City

September 12 | Ask the TVI: In-Person and Online Programs Offered for Children with Visual Impairments or Blindness | Online

September 16 | Tele-Support Talk: Seeing Beyond – Griffin Pinkow's Journey of Resilience and Impact | Online

September 17 | Tech Talk: Mac versus PC | Online

Your support enables Lighthouse Guild to provide the exceptional services that inspire people who are visually impaired to not only plan their futures, but to confidently pursue their goals. Please consider **donating, volunteering, referring** people who can benefit from our programs and services, or spreading the word on **X** and **Facebook**.

Be well and stay safe,



Calvin W. Roberts, MD

President and CEO, Lighthouse Guild

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