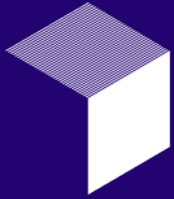
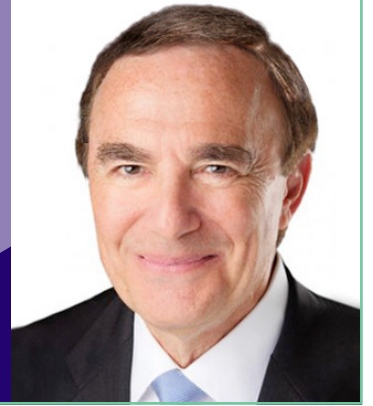


February 2025



# Lighthouse Guild

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



### Listen to the Audio

Dear Friends,

### Low Vision Awareness Month: Highlighting High Tech Solutions

According to JAMA Ophthalmology, seven million people in the United States have low vision, a permanent vision impairment that cannot be corrected with glasses, contacts, medication, or surgery. This condition complicates everyday activities like reading, writing, watching TV, driving, and recognizing faces.

“The most important thing you can do for your eyes is to get a comprehensive eye exam,” says Dr. Rebekah Lin, a Low Vision Specialist at Lighthouse Guild. “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 comprehensive eye exam can detect these diseases in their early stages.



Photo: A man using a head worn device to read an eye chart.

For individuals diagnosed with low vision, assistive technology can help maintain independence and utilize remaining vision. Here are some of the latest innovations making an impact:

- **Eye6 by Eyedaptic:** A lightweight augmented reality smart glasses system that functions as both a wearable and handheld magnifier.
- **Envision Glasses:** AI-powered smart glasses that can read text aloud, describe surroundings, recognize faces, and even make calls.
- **Hable Easy:** An external, tactile keyboard for smartphones, designed for those who struggle with touchscreens.

Not all assistive technologies work the same for every person. “A device that works for someone with glaucoma may not work for someone with macular degeneration or someone with retinitis pigmentosa,” explains Dr. Lin. “That’s why a low vision exam and a personalized approach are essential.”

For more information on Low Vision and how technology can assist, visit our [website](#). You can also request an [appointment](#) for an eye exam with one of our vision experts.

Disclaimer: The provision of products or resources by Lighthouse Guild to its clients is for educational, informational and research purposes only, and does not constitute an endorsement of any product, device, developer, vendor or manufacturer.

## Ulli's Journey: Vision Rehabilitation, Technology & Independence

In 1984, while finishing her studies at medical school in Austria, Ulli developed bilateral uveitis, which left her legally blind and unable to complete her dermatology residency. She has had several more episodes, each worsening her vision, and she still lives in fear of future occurrences.

### A New Approach to Daily Living

In 2010, Ulli and her husband became permanent residents of New York City. She immediately contacted the New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) and Lighthouse Guild. Ulli said, "The support and assistance I received from Lighthouse Guild was immediate." A vision rehabilitation therapist came to her home with several handheld technology devices. She was introduced to a CCTV (closed-circuit television) and equipped with a handheld monocular, magnifiers, goggles, and other small household gadgets to make daily life safer.

Ulli received not only devices but also access to classes, workshops, seminars, and webinars. These resources provided her with opportunities to learn about new technology, manage her finances, organize and locate items in her home, prepare meals, and even slice bread or onions. Additionally, she participated in **mobility training** that boosted her confidence and allowed her to navigate her home and the city safely.

**"The support and assistance I received from Lighthouse Guild was immediate."**

**—Ulli**



Photo: A quote, "The support and assistance I received from Lighthouse Guild was immediate," next to a smiling portrait of Ulli wearing glasses.

With the help of **vision rehabilitation** training and specialized devices, Ulli enjoys a range of hobbies more than ever. She loves cooking Mediterranean and Austrian dishes, as well as baking cakes and pastries. She's also an avid listener of audiobooks on **BARD** and enjoys traveling both with her husband and alone.

Ulli enjoys her visits to museums even more now with the help of her smartphone. It has inspired her to write a blog, "**Zoom In Museums**", where she shares her firsthand experiences regarding the museums' accessibility, large print materials, audio guide accessibility, map availability, and the ease of navigating each museum she visits. She hopes to inspire other visually impaired individuals to venture out to visit them.

Low Vision Specialist Dr. Susan Weinstein is managing her vision care. Ulli shares, "She's focused on my issues and needs and makes me feel valued as a patient. She's always friendly, attentive, helpful, has a great bedside manner, and does an excellent job figuring out what's most helpful for me. I'm very happy that I'm in her capable hands."

### Embracing Technology

Ulli has become a huge fan of the **Technology Center** at Lighthouse Guild. She attributes her choice of appropriate vision devices to Chief Technology Officer Dr. Bryan Wolynski, who was instrumental in assisting her. Ulli said, "Dr. Wolynski is also incredible at technology networking, and his monthly **Tech Talk** and workshops are always insightful, extremely valuable, and helpful to us in our daily lives."

### A Supporter of Vision Research

Ulli said, "I very much value and cherish the work taking place in the **Research Institute** at Lighthouse Guild under the guidance of Chief Research Officer Dr. William Seiple and Director of Research Operations Fernanda Garcia-Pina. Participating in their research projects allows me to learn about new apps and technology devices that can help a visually impaired person." Ulli participated in the Research Institute's recent **study** published in ARVO's January edition of *Translational Vision Science & Technology*, which revealed that individuals with vision loss express high satisfaction when using artificial intelligence (AI) technologies.

## A Word of Advice from Ulli

For individuals with visual impairments who require care, Ulli said, “I suggest they contact Lighthouse Guild and share specific details about their situation, and there will always be someone at Lighthouse Guild who can help them. The programs there also offer an opportunity to meet other people with similar disabilities, and they can learn from others’ shared experiences.”

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

## Remixing Existing Tech to Advance Accessibility

The latest episode of our **On Tech & Vision** podcast focuses on the paradigm shift in innovation. In this episode, I speak with Karthik Mahadevan, the founder and CEO of **Envision**, about how his technology company leverages existing technologies, such as smartphones and smart glasses, to assist users with low vision. Envision’s software utilizes artificial intelligence to recognize important visual cues in a user’s environment and then communicates that information through computer-generated speech.



Photo: A lightbulb with glowing machinery cogs, in and around the bulb, connects to a circuitry board. Behind the lightbulb is a background of blurred machinery cogs and circuitry boards.

Karthik recognized early on that instead of creating new hardware, he could harness the cameras of smartphones and smart glasses that people already owned. This approach allowed Envision to reach a much broader audience. The episode also includes insights from Troy Otilio, the CEO of **Aira**, which connects users to a human visual interpreter. This interpreter can access the camera on the user’s device and help them with tasks such as reading a letter, navigating a grocery store, or finding their way around an unfamiliar city.

Check out **The Paradigm Shift in Innovation: Remixing Existing Tech to Advance Accessibility** to explore this inventive strategy and its implications for the future of tech design.

## Need Help Filing Your 2024 Taxes?

Lighthouse Guild is offering assistance for individuals who are blind or have low vision in filing their 2024 federal, state, and city income tax returns. This service is provided in partnership with the IRS, Bethpage Federal Credit Union, and Urban Upbound. Tax agents will be available at Lighthouse Guild, located at 250 West 64th Street, New York City, on **February 24 and 25**, as well as **March 5, 6 and 18**.



Photo: Part of a calculator sits on a background of tax forms next to a yellow Post-it note that reads “Need Help?”

For more information on dates, times, eligibility, document requirements, and to schedule an appointment, please visit our [website](#).

## Expanding Horizons

We are pleased to announce the Frances Scaife Technology Training Initiative, which will expand our ability to provide essential skills and assistive technology training. This four-year, \$100,000 grant will leverage Lighthouse Guild’s experience and resources with assistive technology to equip many more individuals who are visually impaired with the tools they need to succeed.



Photo: A woman assisting another woman who is visually impaired with her smartphone.

## Join Team #SeeNoLimits in the 2025 TD Five Boro Bike Tour

Lighthouse Guild and the **Foreseeable Future Foundation** share a common goal: to support individuals of all ages who are blind or visually impaired, along with their families. We are teaming up again this year to form **Team #SeeNoLimits** – comprised of cyclist who are blind, visually impaired, and fully sighted – and ride in the **TD Five Boro Bike Tour**. On **Sunday, May 4, 2025**, Team #SeeNoLimits will cycle through all five boroughs of New York City to raise awareness and funds that will directly support services for people who are blind or have low vision. Visit our website to join our team and make a difference!



Photo: Participants from the 2024 Lighthouse Guild Team #NoLimits pose before the TD 5 Boro Bike Tour begins.

We also invite you to join us at our **TD 5 Boro Bike Tour Kickoff** event on **Thursday, March 6**, at 5:30 pm! Guests will have the opportunity to learn more about Team #SeeNoLimit's mission, sign up, or support this important cause.

## Events

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

**March 5** | Tech In-Session: Getting More Out of AI | New York City

**March 6** | 2025 TD 5 Boro Bike Tour Kickoff Event | New York City

**March 13** | Ask the TVI: The Importance of Keeping Your Visually Impaired Children Physically Active | Online

**March 17** | Tele-Support Talk: The Link Between Diet and Eye Health | Online

**March 18** | Tech Talk: Seeing AI Update and Review | Online

**March 26** | Explore Lighthouse Guild Services | Online

**Through March 31** | Lighthouse Guild Scholarship Program: Applications Open | Online

Together, we can help people who are blind or have low vision live the lives they aspire to. Please consider **donating, volunteering, referring** people who can benefit from our programs and services, or spreading the word on **X, Instagram** and **Facebook**.

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

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

**Donate:** [lighthouseguild.org/donate/](https://lighthouseguild.org/donate/)

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

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