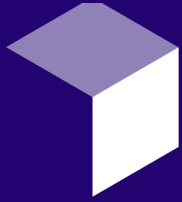
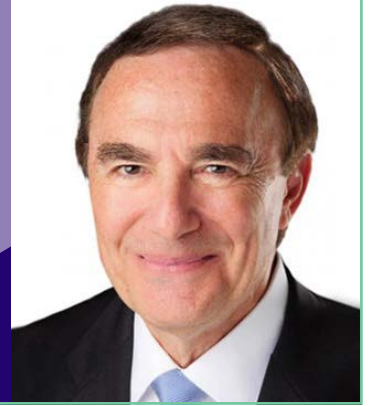


January 2025



# Lighthouse Guild

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



### Listen to the Audio

Dear Friends,

### Preventing Vision Loss from Glaucoma

Glaucoma affects an estimated 4.2 million people in the United States and is known as the “silent thief of sight” because it gradually robs vision without early symptoms. **January is Glaucoma Awareness Month**, highlighting the importance of regular eye exams, which can lead to early diagnosis and help prevent vision loss.

“It’s important to know that while glaucoma cannot be prevented or cured, it is treatable,” says Dr. Laura Sperazza, Director of Vision Rehabilitation Services at Lighthouse Guild. “Early intervention can protect your vision.”



Photo: An older man receiving an eye exam from an eyecare professional.

Glaucoma damages the optic nerve, and many forms progress without noticeable symptoms. A comprehensive dilated eye exam is essential for early detection. Treatments such as prescription eye drops, oral medications, laser treatment, and surgery can slow or prevent vision loss.

For individuals with vision loss due to glaucoma or other conditions, **vision rehabilitation** can enhance daily living quality, supported by technology such as screen readers and apps that assist with navigation and object identification.

Knowing the facts is key to maintaining optimal eye health and preventing vision loss from Glaucoma. For more information on Glaucoma, visit our **website**. You can also request an **appointment** for an eye exam with one of our vision experts.

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## Remembering Andrew H. Marks



Photo: “Remembering Andrew H. Marks” next to a portrait of Mr. Marks.

The Board of Directors, Officers, and Staff of Lighthouse Guild are profoundly saddened by the passing of our esteemed colleague, Andrew H. Marks. A long-time supporter of our organization, Mr. Marks was a member of our Board of Directors for over 25 years and served as Treasurer in 2004. His counsel was highly valued and often sought, helping to advance Lighthouse Guild's mission and enrich the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired. We extend our deepest sympathies to his wife, Terri, and his entire family.

## A New Study Highlights AI's Impact on People with Vision Loss

A new study shows how artificial intelligence is making life easier and more accessible for people with vision loss. Published in the January edition of **Translational Vision Science & Technology**, an ARVO journal, the study reveals that individuals with vision loss express high satisfaction when using artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. The research, conducted here at Lighthouse Guild, underscores AI's transformative potential to enhance the lives of people with visual impairments.



Photo: A hand holding a smartphone scanning a restaurant menu.

“With advancements in computing power and digital imaging, the integration of AI into portable tools such as smart glasses and smartphone apps is shaping the future of assistive technology,” says, Dr. William Seiple, lead author and Chief Research Officer at Lighthouse Guild. “These technologies hold tremendous promise for creating a more inclusive, accessible world for people with vision loss.”

This research was made possible in part by a generous grant from the **American Macular Degeneration Foundation** (AMDF). The foundation is dedicated to the prevention, treatment, and cure of macular degeneration, as well as empowering those with age-related macular degeneration to live life to the fullest.

Check out our [website](#) for more information or visit the ARVO [website](#) to read this groundbreaking study.

## Veronica Glows

Veronica left Ghana for the U.S., seeking the American Dream. She left her three children behind and settled in the Bronx, where she has lived for nearly 20 years. Her courageous sacrifice was not for her own benefit, but to provide a better life for her children, with the hope that they would someday join her.

Veronica's education in Ghana was limited by her difficult upbringing and poor living conditions. After moving to the Bronx, she taught herself English and searched for job opportunities. Eventually, she found work as a home health aide. She also purchased a sewing machine and taught herself how to sew. She hoped this new skill would help her earn extra income to support her three children in Ghana. Her efforts have been enormously successful: one of her children has graduated from medical school and is now working as a doctor; another is a computer technologist, and the third is pursuing studies to become an architect.

## Losing Her Vision

As time passed, Veronica began to experience problems with her vision. After being prescribed glasses, her symptoms worsened within a year. Due to her declining eyesight, she lost her job as a home health aide and could no longer see well enough to thread a needle to sew. Shortly after, her roommate informed her that, because of her vision issues, she would need to find another place to live. Left with no other options, Veronica ended up in a homeless shelter. She felt a deep sense of fear, knowing that without an education and with her vision impairment, finding work would be extremely challenging.

While in the shelter Veronica's vision continued to deteriorate. She was able to see very little out of her left eye and only shadows out of her right eye. After a visit to a vision specialist, she was diagnosed with

a detached retina in both eyes, cataracts in both eyes, and Glaucoma. Surgery was advised to reattach the retinas. Unfortunately, following surgery, her vision did not return. Veronica said, “It was a rough and rocky time for me. I felt my life was shattered and coming to an end and I felt beaten psychologically.” Fortunately, the shelter staff found an apartment for Veronica.

“[They] have experts in every area – mobility training, vision rehabilitation, technology training, and mental [health] therapy. After receiving training there your life will be better than before. Lighthouse Guild is the whole package.”

-Veronica



Photo: A quote, “[They] have experts in every area – mobility training, vision rehabilitation, technology training, and mental [health] therapy. After receiving training there your life will be better than before. Lighthouse Guild is the whole package,” next to a portrait of Veronica smiling.

### **Educational Journey Begins**

Veronica realized that despite the challenges, she still had her strength and intelligence, and she refused to sit idle. She contacted the **New York State Commission for the Blind** (NYSCB) about the possibility of going back to school to learn a business trade. After facing difficulties with a business training program for blind and visually impaired vendors, the NYSCB connected Veronica with Senior Academic Instructor Jacqueline Suh at Lighthouse Guild’s **Academic Program**. She was assessed for her academic skills in Adult Basic Education/High School Equivalency (ABE/HSE) and was determined to be a suitable candidate for the HSE preparation program.

Veronica said, “When I started going to Lighthouse Guild, I was scared, and I felt so inferior. I kept my head down and I thought I could never do it.” However, Veronica passed the GED Social Studies and Math examinations, and said, “My Math instructor Theresa Chinheya taught me patience and she walked me through the Math lessons step by step, and she put it on a level so I could understand it. Math was difficult for me, but Theresa encouraged me and helped me to get rid of my fears. Little by little, I began to understand it more, and I’ve learned so much about Math, as well as American History.”

Veronica worked diligently on the Language Arts and Science portions of the examination with her instructor Gabriella Oldham, who also taught her Social Studies, and although it was challenging, especially with her vision loss, she was excited to learn. Veronica said, “I’m putting my best foot forward and I’m learning. Lighthouse Guild placed a lot of joy in my heart once I made the decision to get my GED. Because of their training, my friends are now calling me for my assistance to help them learn Math.”

Veronica completed her training and received her HSE diploma in October 2024. Her goal after receiving her diploma, was to attend college and become a counselor. She shares, “I encourage others with a vision impairment who want to receive a GED to reach out to the Academic Program at Lighthouse Guild. The program can help them begin to build a future for themselves and their family, and it will enable them to contribute to society. They will light the candle in you, and you will be able to glow.”

### **Vision Rehabilitation**

Veronica also dedicated time to learn from Vision Rehabilitation Therapist Lilly Harris who provided her with safety tips she can use in the kitchen – how to safely cut fruits and vegetables and how to safely use the stove. She also received mobility training on how to use her cane safely when outdoors and crossing the street. She was provided with an in-home device she uses that indicates when a cup with liquid is nearly full. Bump Dots were placed on her stove, countertops, and microwave to help her locate and use the correct buttons and knobs to operate her appliances.

Veronica has also learned keyboarding, the Microsoft Office and Excel programs and how to go online to conduct searches by using keyboard combinations. Veronica said, “Adaptive Technology Specialist Ed Plumacher has all the patience in the world, and I like the way he teaches. Ed’s assistance has been excellent and I’m gradually getting where I need to be.”

Veronica said, “Lighthouse Guild is not only for academic training, but they have experts in every area – **mobility training, vision rehabilitation, technology training, and mental health therapy.** After receiving training there your life will be better than before. Lighthouse Guild is the whole package.”

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

## Welcome, New Board Member

We are pleased to announce that Jay R. Fialkoff has joined the Lighthouse Guild Board of Directors.

“I am honored to join the Board of Directors and have the opportunity to support the goals and mission of this iconic organization.”

- Jay Fialkoff



Photo: A quote, “I am honored to join the Board of Directors and have the opportunity to support the goals and mission of this iconic organization,” next to a portrait of Jay Fialkoff.

Mr. Fialkoff is Senior Counsel and former managing partner at Moses & Singer LLP in New York City. He has practiced commercial civil litigation in New York for over 45 years, representing many owners of New York City real property in complex litigation. He has also supported a number of organizations that provide services to the disabled, particularly in the areas of vision loss and retinal disease.

“Lighthouse Guild is a leader in promoting advances in technology and research that are transforming the world for people with visual impairments,” Mr. Fialkoff said. “I am honored to join the Board of Directors and have the opportunity to support the goals and mission of this iconic organization.”

To learn more about Mr. Fialkoff, visit our [website](#).

## Driving and Vision

Self-driving cars are all the buzz when it comes to cutting edge driving technology that could help people with vision impairment drive. However, simpler technologies are already making a difference. In the latest episode of the **On Tech and Vision** podcast, I speak with Dr. Henry Greene, co-founder and president of **Ocutech**, about their bioptic driving telescopes designed to provide a wider field of vision for drivers with visual impairments. Dr. William Seiple, Chief Research Officer at Lighthouse Guild, also shares insights on how technological advancements used by all consumers – such as GPS – are enabling everyone to rely less on their vision while driving. Listen to **“How Well Do We Really Need to See to Drive”** to learn more.



Photo: A steering wheel and dashboard. A driver’s left hand is on the steering wheel, while their right hand is touching a digital screen showing a map.

## Kicking Off Our Visionary Season in Palm Beach

Lighthouse Guild held two kick off events to build momentum for our upcoming **“A Visionary Evening Dinner”** which will honor the achievements of **Mary Mahoney** and **Patrick and Milly Park** whose generosity has been crucial to our success.

## Holiday Tea

We celebrated the start of Lighthouse Guild's 18th season in Palm Beach with a Holiday Tea in December, hosted by **Mary Mahoney** and her granddaughter, **Anais Porthault**, at Ms. Mahoney's iconic Worth Avenue store, renowned for the finest luxury tableware, crystal, linens and home décor.

## Cocktail Reception

The Findlay Galleries on Worth Avenue in Palm Beach, the iconic, family-owned art business founded in 1870, hosted a cocktail reception on January 22, for supporters and friends. The evening was made possible by **James Borynack** and **Adolfo Zaralegui** of Findlay Galleries. **Marc Rosen**, founder of the Palm Beach Friends of Lighthouse Guild, welcomed the guests. I made a brief presentation about how our programs intersect with art and was honored to share two amazing portraits created by clients from Lighthouse Guild's Saturday **Youth Transition Program**.



Photos: Left to right, Anais Porthault, Dr. Calvin Roberts and Mary Mahoney at the Holiday Tea; James Borynack and Frannie Scaife at the Cocktail Reception.

For more information or to join us in Palm Beach for our **"A Visionary Evening Dinner"** on **February 24, 2025**, contact Phyllis Farmer at **646-874-8445** or **farmerp@lighthouseguild.org**.

## An Inspiring Cabaret

Lighthouse Guild hosted a special evening of Cabaret at The Green Room 42, featuring an exceptional performance by **Billy Stritch** and **Nicolas King**. The event not only raised support for our programs, but also helped raise awareness about the importance of vision health and our services that inspire people who are blind or visually impaired to attain their goals.



Photo: From left to right, Billy Stritch seated at the piano, a man playing the bass and Nicolas King singing into a microphone.

## Events

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

**February 12** | Tech In-Session: Ray-Ban Meta Glasses | New York City

**February 13** | Ask the TVI: Summer Camp | Online

**February 17** | Tele-Support Talk: Unlocking Potential with Diagnostic Vocational Evaluations | Online

**February 18** | Tech Talk: The World of AI | Online

**February 24** | A Visionary Evening Dinner | Palm Beach, Florida

For tickets or more information about “**A Visionary Evening**,” contact Phyllis Farmer at **646-874-8445** or [farmerp@lighthouseguild.org](mailto:farmerp@lighthouseguild.org).

**February 29** | Explore Lighthouse Guild Services | Online

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

With your help, people with vision impairment can get all the support and resources they need to succeed in life! Please give 2025 a kick-start by supporting our mission through **donating**, **volunteering**, **referring** people who can benefit from our programs and services, or spreading the word on **X**, **Instagram** and **Facebook**.

Be well and stay safe,



**Calvin W. Roberts, MD**

President and CEO, Lighthouse Guild  
X: @EyeDrCal

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

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