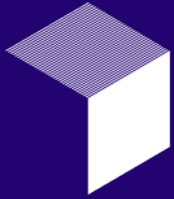
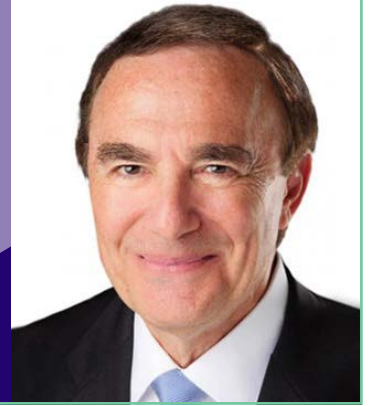


March 2025



Lighthouse Guild

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



Listen to the Audio

Dear Friends,

A Message from Dr. Calvin W. Roberts

Dear Friends,

This is my final newsletter, as my term as Lighthouse Guild's CEO ends at the end of March. Serving as CEO of Lighthouse Guild over the past five years has been an incredible honor, and I am grateful to be part of a community so dedicated to supporting one another. When I first joined, I set out to strengthen our role in assistive technology to better serve people who are blind or visually impaired. With that vision, we established the Lighthouse Guild Technology Center and expanded our offerings to ensure individuals with vision loss have access to the latest and most effective tools to support their independence.

Lighthouse Guild is now a leader in assistive technology, offering expert guidance on the best available devices and applications. Our approach focuses on the individuals we serve, combining real-world experience with scientific research to provide expert recommendations. We also share valuable insights through national teleconferences and published studies, helping to expand access to these resources for all who need them.

Beyond technology, Lighthouse Guild is here to support every aspect of the journey for people who are blind or have low vision, from rehabilitation, work readiness and employment services to specialized healthcare services. Whether our clients are learning new skills, accessing medical care, or finding ways to stay connected, we are committed to providing the highest level of care and service.

Lighthouse Guild is well-positioned to expand our programs and services, and I eagerly anticipate the impact that our new President and CEO, **Thomas Panek**, will have as he leads this remarkable organization.

Maura Sweeney Named COO

I am pleased to announce that **Maura Sweeney** has been promoted to Chief Operating Officer of Lighthouse Guild, effective April 1, 2025. Maura joined Lighthouse Guild in 2010 and currently serves as the Chief Program and Services Officer. With her extensive knowledge as a healthcare professional and her valuable experience and insights, Maura has been a trusted advisor during my tenure at Lighthouse Guild. Her deep understanding of our facilities and programs makes her the ideal candidate to lead our operations as we grow and expand our services. "I'm thrilled to continue working alongside our dedicated team in this new role, and I look forward to all that we'll accomplish together," says Sweeney.

"I'm thrilled to continue working alongside our dedicated team in this new role, and I look forward to all that we'll accomplish together."

—Maura Sweeney



Photo: A quote "I'm thrilled to continue working alongside our dedicated team in this new role, and I look forward to all that we'll accomplish together," next to a portrait of Maura Sweeney.

March is Social Work Awareness Month

With the increasing focus on self-care, social workers play an essential role in helping individuals manage stress and maintain mental health. For those with vision loss, self-care can be particularly challenging. Fortunately, social workers at Lighthouse Guild's **Behavioral Health Services** are available to help manage stress and find effective solutions.

“When a person receives a diagnosis of vision loss, it can initially be devastating,” says Jocelyn Tapia, LCSW-R, Clinical Social Worker at Lighthouse Guild. “Social workers coordinate care, connect people with resources, and offer a listening ear. We are licensed to assess biological, psychological, and social situations, and make mental health diagnoses.”

Ms. Tapia recommends the following tips for mental health and self-care.



Photo: A support group comprised of 10 people of various ages and genders sitting in a circle.

Education

Recognizing the signs and symptoms of stress and learning about the resources available, is the first step toward effective self-care. Treatment options can vary significantly, including one-on-one counseling and community support groups specifically designed for individuals dealing with vision loss.

Find the Right Approach

There is no universal formula for an ideal support system. Some people benefit from personal therapy, while others find strength in connecting with those who share similar experiences. A balanced approach combining both can also be effective.

Consider the Benefits

Speaking with a professional in a supportive environment allows for vulnerability and emotional expression that can be difficult with friends and family. This experience promotes self-reflection and helps uncover inner strengths. Joining a support group with others who have experienced vision loss can also build friendships and create valuable support networks. For more on the benefits of social workers visit our [website](#).

Ginny is More than a Fan

Ginny is 67 years old and has experienced low vision since birth. She was born with Amblyopia in her right eye, a visual development disorder that prevents the eye from achieving normal visual acuity. As a result, she has worn thick lenses since she was 18 months old. Throughout her childhood, this condition required her to wear an eyepatch. Ginny describes her vision impairment as inconvenient, often needing bright light to see clearly. Despite having low vision, Ginny enjoyed a successful career first as an in-house attorney and later as a compliance officer until her retirement a couple of years ago.

A Family Affair

Approximately 20 years ago, a nephew and a niece of Ginny's were diagnosed with Stargardt's Disease, a genetic eye disorder that causes progressive vision loss due to the degeneration of the macula. The news was terribly upsetting for the family, especially for Ginny's brother and sister-in-law. It was during this time that the family discovered Lighthouse Guild and former Chief of Low Vision Services Dr. Bruce Rosenthal. Ginny said, "Dr. Rosenthal not only gave beautiful treatment to my niece and nephew, but he also provided a great comfort to my brother and his wife. As soon as I witnessed the relationship they had developed, I quickly followed them there." Dr. Rosenthal prescribed Ginny with thinner lenses, making it no longer necessary for her to wear thick and heavy bottle cap lenses that made an indentation on her nose. He fine-tuned her prescription, and her eyesight had plateaued with minimal changes. Ginny remained under his watchful care until his retirement.

“Every time I go to Lighthouse Guild, I’m amazed at the kindness of the people who work there. From the minute you arrive, the staff are all kind, caring, and professional.”

—Ginny



Photo: A quote, “Every time I go to Lighthouse Guild, I’m amazed at the kindness of the people who work there. From the minute you arrive, the staff are all kind, caring, and professional,” next to a portrait of Ginny wearing glasses and smiling.

A Change in Vision

Recently, Ginny noticed that her surroundings didn’t seem as bright as they once did, leading her to consider replacing the light bulbs in her home. In July 2024, during her first appointment with Low Vision Specialist Dr. Susan Weinstein, Ginny learned that her vision had started to deteriorate. Dr. Weinstein also discovered a significant increase in the pressure in Ginny’s eyes and noted changes in the shape of her eyes. Ginny recalled that Dr. Weinstein took considerable time to conduct a thorough eye examination, and other technicians were brought in to perform additional tests. The eye pressure was so high that dilating her eyes for a complete examination was not possible. Dr. Weinstein recommended that Ginny see a vision specialist, who ultimately determined that dilation was too risky and recommended surgery.

An Incredible Transformation

Ginny underwent two surgeries, which included the removal of cataracts and the implantation of lenses. As a result, her increased eye pressure was also reduced. After a week of post-surgery care, during which the patches and stitches were removed, Ginny discovered that not only could she see again, but her vision had improved significantly. At the age of 67, she found that she could see better than she had at just one year old. As she left the doctor’s office with her sister, Ginny recalled saying, “I have never walked down the streets of New York City without eyeglasses.” She described the feeling as being “absolutely incredible.” She still wakes up every morning, reaches for her eyeglasses, and remembers that she doesn’t need them anymore.

A Grateful Note

Ginny was grateful to Dr. Weinstein for the care and the recommendation she provided. In a recent letter to Dr. Weinstein Ginny wrote, “I felt your concern for me and my vision the moment I met you. You assisted your technical team in conducting, and then you conducted, an exhaustive examination of my eyes. You spent an inordinate amount of time with me and the skill and kindness shown by you and your team was incredibly comforting to me.”

To Ginny, there is something very special about Dr. Weinstein who shared, “Not only was Dr. Weinstein able to lead me to the right place for my surgery, but she educated me as to why I was going and what to expect. She and her incredibly skilled team made it very comforting. They are life savers.”

About Lighthouse Guild

“Every time I go to Lighthouse Guild, I’m amazed at the kindness of the people who work there. From the minute you arrive, the staff are all kind, caring, and professional. It’s a wonderful organization with a broad collection of services available and filled with incredibly skilled people who know what they’re doing,” Ginny says. “In the beginning I was just a fan and now I feel indebted to Lighthouse Guild.”

Read more about Ginny’s experience by visiting our [website](#).

Expanding Access

We are pleased to announce a transformative, three-year, \$645,000 grant from the **Lavelle Fund for the Blind**. This investment in our mission will enable a significant expansion of our core efforts in assistive technology and training.

Technology offers a wide range of resources for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, helping them to maintain their independence, achieve their goals, and connect meaningfully with others. However, the effectiveness of these resources depends on the quality of training and support provided.



Photos: From left to right, a Tech Pals mentor assists an older woman with her smartphone; Occupational Therapist Inna Babaeva shows an older woman the various apps on her smartphone.

With this grant, along with support from partners like the **CTA Foundation** and the **Frances G. Scaife Foundation**, Lighthouse Guild will enhance its capacity to offer technology training. This project leverages our experience and expertise in assistive technology to deliver essential skills and training through various methods, including one-on-one instruction, group sessions, and both in-person and virtual options.

The Lavelle Fund for the Blind has been a long-standing partner of Lighthouse Guild and a leader in vision health and rehabilitation. We are truly grateful for their support. In collaboration with the Lavelle Fund for the Blind, we significantly expanded our national **Tele-Support Program**. We look forward to further evolving our technology training offerings for hundreds of individuals over the next three years.

Recognizing Excellence in Low Vision Research

We are pleased to announce that **Jacque Duncan, MD, FARVO** is the 2025 **Oberdorfer Award** in Low Vision Research Recipient. Dr. Duncan is chair and distinguished professor at the Department of Ophthalmology, University of California. She has expertise in the diagnosis and management of patients with retinal degenerations including age-related macular degeneration, retinitis pigmentosa, cone-rod dystrophy and Stargardt disease. To learn more about Dr. Duncan and the Oberdorfer Award, visit our [website](#).

A Visionary Evening to Remember

We hosted our annual dinner, **“A Visionary Evening,”** where we were delighted to honor the contributions of **Patrick and Milly Park** for their generous support and philanthropic efforts towards Lighthouse Guild and the community. Additionally, we recognized **Mary Mahoney** for her steadfast commitment to our organization and the individuals we serve. Proceeds from the event will support our programs and services designed to help people who are blind or visually impaired achieve their aspirations.



Photo: From left to right, Mary Mahoney, Patrick and Milly Park, and Dr. Calvin Roberts

The evening’s highlight came when **Lauren Oplinger**, a member of the Lighthouse Guild’s Advisory Board and a JP Morgan Disability Champion Award winner, inspired us all by sharing her powerful journey of vision loss and remarkable resilience.

Off to a Great Start

Our TD 5 Boro Bike Tour Kickoff Event with **Team #SeeNoLimits** was a tremendous success. New and prospective riders had the opportunity to learn more about the tour and get their questions answered. The energy and enthusiasm at the event were palpable, which contributed to 11 new riders signing up for the team.



Photo: A woman is smiling and giving a “thumbs up” sign while sitting with volunteers who are assisting her to register for Team #SeeNoLimits

No Limits, Just Miles – Join Us!

Riders Needed! Join **Team #SeeNoLimits** to ride in **New York City’s TD 5 Boro Bike Tour on Sunday, May 4, 2025**, and help make a difference in the lives of individuals with vision loss. Riders will raise awareness and funds that will directly support the services provided by Lighthouse Guild and **Foreseeable Future Foundation**. Experience the thrill of biking through all five boroughs alongside over 32,000 other cyclists. Visit our [website](#) to join our team or support our riders!

Central Park Cycle with Team #SeeNoLimits! Whether you’ve already joined **Team #SeeNoLimits**, are interested in joining, or want to stay active and healthy, everyone is invited to practice with us on **Saturday, April 5, 2025** in Central Park! Learn about the tour, the best ways to train, and general tips on cycling followed by a 6-mile loop through the park. Visit our [website](#) to register for our practice ride.

Events

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

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

April 5 | Central Park Cycle with Team #SeeNoLimits | New York City

April 9 | Tech In-Session: Patriot Vision Assistive Devices | New York City

April 10 | Ask the TVI: Braille | Online

April 11 | EyeCare EyeWear Fabulous Frame Festival | New York City

April 15 | Tech Talk: Discover Envision Ally | Online

April 21 | Tele-Support Talk | Online

April 30 | Explore Lighthouse Guild Services | Online

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your unwavering support and dedication to our mission. Your continued support will empower Lighthouse Guild to forge ahead with confidence and make a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals who are visually impaired. 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
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