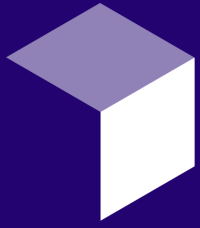
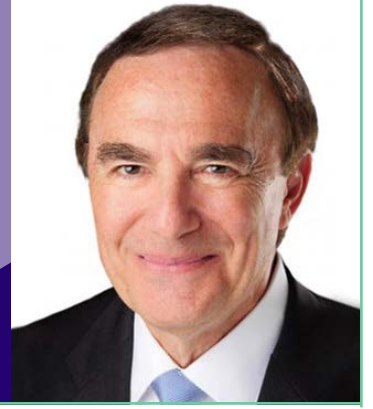


November 2024



Lighthouse Guild

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



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Dear Friends,

Diabetes: What You Need to Know

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 38 million Americans have diabetes, which means that about 1 in 10 people in the U.S. are affected. At Lighthouse Guild, we recognize that one of the most serious complications related to diabetes is vision loss. Fortunately, you can help reduce the risk and preserve eyesight.



Photo: A nurse uses a glucometer to check a male patient's blood sugar levels.

“The most important step is to have regular physical exams and comprehensive dilated eye examinations,” says Dr. Laura Sperazza, Director of Low Vision Services at Lighthouse Guild. “Diabetic eye diseases, such as diabetic retinopathy, a serious eye disorder caused by damage to the blood vessels in the back of the eye, often have no symptoms in the early stages. By regularly monitoring eye health, treatment can begin as soon as signs of disease appear, helping to prevent vision loss.”

November is Diabetes Awareness Month, and we urge everyone to be aware of the risks and take steps to preserve their health and vision. For more information about risks for diabetes and diabetes-related eye disease and tips on what you can do, visit our [website](#).

Frdous' Dream is Possible

At the age of five, Frdous was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa. Now 42 years old, she also manages a rare genetic congenital disability that includes a unique movement disorder. She is believed to be one of only three people in the U.S. with this neurological condition. As a result, Frdous experiences significant impairments in her vision, speech, and physical movement, as well as a slight hearing impairment.

By the end of her eighth-grade year, she faced significant challenges in school, such as seeing the blackboard and reading her assignment books. These difficulties became so overwhelming that she felt her only option was to drop out of school. This decision was especially tough for her, as she dreamed of attending college and pursuing a career.

An Opportunity to Fulfill Her Dream

Frdous was able to pursue her dream after sharing her desire to earn her GED with an assistive technology instructor at the **Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library**. The instructor connected her with a counselor at the **New York State Commission for the Blind** (NYSCB), who then referred her to Lighthouse Guild.

“Lighthouse Guild staff are very kind and helpful, and they’re helping many blind people in a lot of different areas. I’m learning a lot from all my instructors and my experience with them is very positive.”

—Frdous.



Photo: A quote, “Lighthouse Guild staff are very kind and helpful, and they’re helping many blind people in a lot of different areas. I’m learning a lot from all my instructors and my experience with them is very positive,” next to a smiling portrait of Frdous.

The Journey Begins

In 2018, Frdous’ NYSCB counselor reached out to the **Academic Program** at Lighthouse Guild, marking the beginning of her journey to prepare for the GED exam. She was initially assigned to study math with an instructor and was also learning Braille from instructor Audrey Schading. Frdous had a wonderful experience working with both instructors.

Frdous feels a special connection with her current Lighthouse Guild Academic Instructors, Gabriella Oldham and Theresa Chinheya. She says, “They are very patient with me, and they understand that I have a speech impairment. They work with me so it doesn’t stop me from achieving my goal.” To assist with her speech impairment, Frdous is on a waiting list to receive an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) device. In the meantime, she communicates with her instructors by using a keyboard to text her responses on her mobile phone. Frdous added, “I always look forward to seeing Gabriella and Theresa because they are helpful to me, and they are always fun to be around.”

High School Equivalency (HSE) examination training has been extremely helpful to Frdous in taking her first step in achieving her goal and it helped her to pass her first official GED exam in Reasoning through Language Arts (RLA) with a high score. When she was nearly ready to take the RLA exam, she had multiple practice sessions with Vision Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT) Instructor Monica Torres, who also served as her GED exam reader. Excited about passing her test with a high score, Frdous said, “When I passed the test, I couldn’t believe it, and it made me feel very happy and proud of myself. It motivates me to continue with my studies so I can pass the other three exams.”

Frdous also acknowledges that Lighthouse Guild’s Senior Academic Instructor, Jacqueline Suh has been a helpful ambassador for her and said, “Jacqueline read the GED reading and writing practice test to me, she conducted meetings with me and my commission counselor whenever my authorization expired and assisted me with getting reauthorized.”

Jacqueline Suh worked closely with Judith Katzen, Director of Rehabilitation, to secure the necessary accommodations for Frdous, due to the complexity of requirements for her multiple disabilities, including multiple meetings with the GED Accommodations team. As a condition for their approval, Frdous had to pass a GED Ready (official GED practice) test in one of the subject areas. Suh administered the practice test in RLA, which Frdous passed, paving the way for her to subsequently take and pass the official GED RLA exam. Suh stated, “Frdous has what it takes to reach her goal of getting her high school equivalency diploma. Passing the language arts, one of the more difficult tests, with a high score has given her a confidence boost that will surely help her go the distance.”

Orientation & Mobility Training Makes a Difference

Having a vision impairment has significantly impacted Frdous’ daily life. She finds it challenging to use the stove for cooking due to the fear of getting burned. When she drops small items on the floor, like a pill, she struggles to locate them and often needs her mother’s assistance. This has also instilled a fear in her when walking alone on the street, as she only feels comfortable when accompanied by a sighted family member. However, she is making great progress in this area. She stated, “After undertaking **Orientation & Mobility** training at Lighthouse Guild, I have learned how to use the cane properly and how to travel safely. Now, I’m feeling more comfortable going outdoors alone.”

Keyboard training has also been helpful to Frdous, who said, “It has helped me to increase my typing speed, and I always look forward to seeing the Keyboarding instructor Dennis Farro because he’s very nice and helpful to me.”

Frdous' Path Ahead

Currently, Frdous is still determining what she wants to study in college, but she thinks she may want to attend Brooklyn College and study computer science. After college, her goal is to work in an office setting that doesn't require speaking. Frdous enjoys reading, listening to modern and classical music, taking long walks, surfing the internet to learn about new things, and spending valuable time with her boyfriend.

A Learning Experience

Frdous recommends the Academic Training program, stating, "It's the first step for any blind person who plans to achieve their goal of obtaining a GED." She continues, "Lighthouse Guild staff are very kind and helpful, and they're helping many blind people in a lot of different areas. I'm learning a lot from all my instructors and my experience with them is very positive."

To learn more about Frdous and her experience, visit our [website](#).

GuildCare Members Enjoy a Scary Good Time

Our GuildCare facilities were abuzz with Halloween spirit as our clients enjoyed festive celebrations, including games, singing, and a multi-sensory haunted house! This was all made possible thanks to the exceptional staff and volunteers.



Photos, left to right: A corporate volunteer from Goldman Sachs helps a Manhattan GuildCare client dip his hand in a bowl filled with mysterious objects; Clients at Buffalo GuildCare in colorful costumes sing Halloween songs.

With centers in New York City, Albany, Buffalo, and Niagara Falls, our **GuildCare Adult Day Health Care** program offers nursing care, diabetes care, physical, occupational, and speech therapy, medication management, vision rehabilitation therapy, social work services, and structured therapeutic activities in a safe, comfortable, and attentive environment. Services and activities are specially designed and adapted for individuals with all levels of disability – physical, cognitive, and visual.

Our GuildCare team is ready to provide your patient or loved one with the daily care that meets their medical and social needs. For more information, to make a referral, or to schedule a tour, visit our [website](#).

World Disability Day Celebration at Unilever

Lighthouse Guild celebrated World Disability Day at the **Unilever** headquarters in New Jersey. During the event, Unilever employees learned about the programs and services offered by Lighthouse Guild and participated in packaging holiday gifts for our GuildCare clients. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone at Unilever for hosting this meaningful event and for generously donating 300 bottles of body wash as gifts for our GuildCare members.



Photos, left to right: Lighthouse Guild volunteer Shanell Matos, Development and Special Projects Manager Kiana Glanton, Emeline Lakrout of Unilever, Lighthouse Guild CDO Brian Dever and Marketing Manager Jeremy Morak at our informational table; Unilever employees experiencing tactile communication tools.

Looking Good and Doing Good with the Two Blind Brothers

We were pleased to host an evening at Lighthouse Guild's **EyeCare EyeWear Optical Boutique** featuring the **2BB: Eyewear** line from the **Two Blind Brothers**. Guests perused the stunning selection of frames, savored refreshments and had the opportunity to meet Bradford Manning, co-founder of the Two Blind Brothers who shared their inspiring mission and why he and his brother ventured into creating eyewear that makes a difference. All sales during the event went towards research and services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.



Photos, left to right: A guest browses the 2BB: frames as Optician Natasha Brown helps her select the perfect pair; Bradford Manning is interviewed by Chief Technology Officer Dr. Bryan Wolynski.

To learn more about **EyeCare EyeWear @ Lighthouse Guild** or make an appointment for best in class care and fashion forward frames, visit our [website](#). You will **Look Good and Do Good** as every eyewear purchase will support Lighthouse Guild's exceptional services that inspire individuals who are visually impaired to live the lives they aspire to.

Meaningful Support

We extend our sincere gratitude to the **Llewellyn Burchell Charitable Trust** for their generous funding of our Adult Day Health Care program, **GuildCare**, and to the **Graham Family Foundation** for its support of our **Tech Pals** and **Tele-Support** initiatives.



Photos, left to right: Assistant Recreation Worker Annette White leads a GuildCare client in an invigorating exercise; A Tech Pals mentor helps an older woman learn the apps on her iPhone.

Events

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

December 10 | Tech Talk: Year in Review 2024 – Assistive Technology Innovations, Web Accessibility, and Reddit /r/Blind | Online

December 11 | Tech In-Session: Using Reddit and Community Engagement | New York City

December 12 | Ask the TVI: Assistive Technology | Online

December 18 | Explore Technology Offerings and Lighthouse Guild Services | Online

Giving Thanks, Making a Difference

There are so many reasons to be thankful. At Lighthouse Guild, we are most thankful for the support that enables us to provide exceptional services that inspire people who are visually impaired to attain their goals. We hope you will take the time on **December 3, Giving Tuesday**, or any time before the end of 2024 to give a **gift of support** to Lighthouse Guild. The holidays can be difficult for some, especially people with vision impairment. Our services are a lifeline for those coping with depression and vision-related challenges. With your help, we can do so much in the lives of so many, and that is something we can all be thankful for.

Please also consider **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/

Share: X @lighthousegl | Facebook @lighthouseguild



Dedicated to providing exceptional services that inspire people who are visually impaired to attain their goals.
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