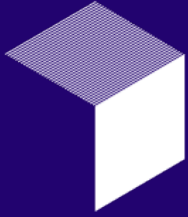
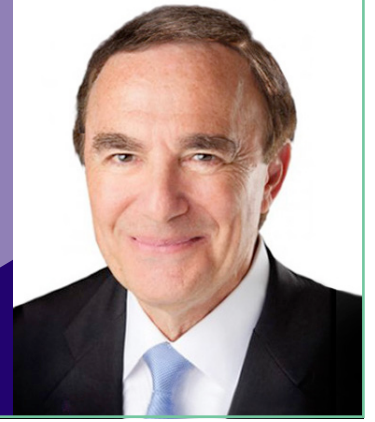


October 2024



Lighthouse Guild

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



Listen to the Audio

Dear Friends,

October is **National Disability Employment Awareness Month**. It aims to raise awareness about employing individuals with disabilities, recognize their valuable contributions, and emphasize the importance of inclusive work environments and equal opportunities.



Photo: A man speaking on a smartphone and using a computer in an office.

It is also a reminder that job hunting can be daunting for people with disabilities. However, by focusing on strengths, utilizing resources, and staying positive, the process can be effectively navigated. Marcia Shaw, Manager of Placement at Lighthouse Guild, says, "Job searching can take time, so focus on your progress and stay motivated."

Here are a few tips to help with the job search:

- **Utilize online platforms** such as LinkedIn which can help you connect without the barriers that in-person events may present. Make sure LinkedIn profiles are current and write recommendations for connections.
- **Leverage assistive technology.** Use tools and apps that can help you communicate effectively, such as speech-to-text software, screen readers, or other assistive devices.
- **Reach out to organizations** that offer job placement services and resources for individuals with disabilities.
- **Get comfortable in front of the camera.** Virtual job interviews are common, so it's important to be proficient with video platforms like Zoom.
- **Networking.** Reach out to friends, family and professional contacts. Let them know what you are looking for.
- **Follow up.** After meeting someone, send a thank-you message to express your interest in staying in touch. This can help solidify your connection.

For additional job search tips, visit our [website](#).

Accessible Voting: Know Your Rights!

Early voting has begun in many states, and election day is just around the corner. New York voters who have trouble with paper ballots can use a Ballot Marking Device (BMD). This device can enlarge text, read the ballot aloud, and is simple to use. It offers a secure and independent voting experience, particularly for those who are visually impaired or have trouble marking a paper ballot.

Here are some effective tips to ensure New York voters get the assistance they need when casting their votes:

- **Ask to use a Ballot Marking Device** as soon as you arrive at your polling site.
- **Working BMDs are required at all Poll Sites.** If you are told “the Ballot Marking Devices are not working,” ask to speak with the Poll Site Coordinator. They are required to reach out to the Board of Elections and have a replacement device delivered as soon as possible.
- **Be assertive and know your rights!** You are your best advocate; tools are available to ensure you can cast your ballot, but it’s your responsibility to ask.



Photo: A man wearing headphones seated in front of Ballot Marking Device, trying it out.

Every voter’s right to independent and accessible voting is fundamental to our democracy! For additional voting tips and resources visit our [website](#).

Zachary’s New Way of Living

Thirty-one-year-old Zachary, a resident of Brooklyn, New York, is someone who considers himself to be ambitious and motivated. He has always had a strong passion for baseball, playing competitively during high school and college and recreationally during his spare time. Zachary is the Director of Finance at Harry’s, Inc. He is also passionate about his role as a leader in the company’s Disability Advocacy Program. This program focuses on building relationships by identifying and partnering with non-profit organizations for special projects within the community.

A Life-Altering Experience

At the age of 30, Zachary suffered a life-altering experience caused by a virus that led to brain and spinal cord inflammation (Encephalitis), which resulted in a vasculitis to his eyes, causing retinal and optic nerve damage (Retinal Ischemia), hearing loss, and a host of other neurological symptoms.

Following this harrowing experience, Zachary could not move, and he was hospitalized for over a month due to the neurological symptoms. Over time, he relearned how to shave, wash his face, brush his teeth, and walk. After undergoing intensive physical and occupational therapy, most symptoms resolved. Physically, Zachary considers himself back to normal except for hearing loss – which is addressed by using hearing aids – and vision loss.

The Journey Forward

Upon discharge from the hospital, his medical team recommended that he reach out to Lighthouse Guild for vision rehabilitation services. Zachary admits he had zero concept of what the term “low vision” meant. In the beginning, navigating the system was a bit of a challenge. He needed to receive a certification as being legally blind to apply for services with The New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB), and then connect with Lighthouse Guild for vision rehabilitation therapy.

Once connected with Lighthouse Guild, Outreach Coordinator Lisa Beth Miller provided Zachary with valuable information and resources. A comprehensive low vision exam by the Director of **Low Vision Services**, Dr. Laura Sperazza, led to a diagnosis certifying Zachary as legally blind. That diagnosis granted him access to certain services from the NYSCB.

Zachary was also working with **Occupational Therapist** Alice Massa. According to Zachary, his introduction to Alice was a huge turning point and the most impactful upon his beginning of services at Lighthouse Guild. “She was the first member of the team I met who was also visually impaired. She sat down and talked with me, and she matched my [drive] to achieve.” said Zachary. He credits Alice with giving him confidence and showing him that there was a path forward and that she would help him find

his way. “Alice was a really strong contributor and an example for me that I remember with fondness and appreciation,” said Zachary.

Learning a New Way to Navigate

After returning home from the hospital, Zachary wouldn't leave his apartment alone and required a family member or friend to accompany him to all appointments. All this changed once Lighthouse Guild's **Orientation & Mobility** and **Vision Rehabilitation** Therapist, Jeffrey Ambury, came to his home. “Jeffrey arrived with a white cane and helped me to understand my level of vision impairment, how to use the cane, and the mechanics around it,” said Zachary. He learned how to approach street corners, analyze the traffic patterns, and cross the street safely. Zachary also learned how to navigate the subway system. “Teaching me these helpful strategies on [using the subway safely] was another huge step forward for me. The orientation and mobility training with Jeffrey was a fantastic experience,” said Zachary.

“What Lighthouse Guild has created and the community impact building that is taking place there, I see them as leaders and examples for others to emulate.”

—Zachary



Photo: A quote, “What Lighthouse Guild has created and the community impact building that is taking place there, I see them as leaders and examples for others to emulate,” next to a portrait of Zachary who is smiling.

A Passion for Baseball is Reignited

While undergoing training with Alice, Zachary shared his experience and love for baseball. She introduced Zachary to staff members of Lighthouse Guild who are also players on the organization's Blind Baseball team, the **Lightning**. Zachary attended tryouts, joined the team and has been training ever since.

“The game of blind baseball has been a gift to me for many reasons — it's reignited my competitive sports career, inspired me to keep in good shape, and build new adaptive skills. But most of all, the Blind Baseball community is a family that I have been so honored to be part of. My teammates and indeed my competitors fill me with an immense sense of disability pride, and having the opportunity to represent my country in athletic competition helped me fulfill a lifelong dream.” Zachary recently participated with other Lightning team members who played on Team USA in the 2024 Blind Baseball International Cup.

Advocating

After learning about Lighthouse Guild's GuildCare Adult Day Health Care and Youth and Teen Services programs, Zachary worked with Kiana Glanton, Development and Special Projects Manager, to partner Lighthouse Guild with Harry's Disability Advocacy Program. Harry's employees recently packed gift bags with the company's shaving products, body washes, and personal care items for participants in Lighthouse Guild's programs. They also hosted Lighthouse Guild staff for a panel discussion about our organization's services and the experiences of those who are blind or have low vision. “Lighthouse Guild's partnership is one that we're happy about and looking forward to continuing,” said Zachary.

Feeling Grateful

For anyone diagnosed with low vision and in need of services, Zachary said, “They should run, to Lighthouse Guild, not walk. What Lighthouse Guild has created and the community impact building that is taking place there, I see them as leaders and examples for others to emulate. I have had a wonderful experience, and to this date, partnership with Lighthouse Guild. I am grateful for the friendships, relationships, and now collaboration and partnership that have developed with the Lighthouse Guild staff.”

To read more about Zachary, visit our [website](#).

GuildCare Members Celebrate Fall

In a lively celebration of wellness, relaxation, and fun, our **GuildCare Adult Day Health Care** program members participated in a series of exciting events designed to rejuvenate the mind, body, and spirit. From the calming indulgence of spa care to the scenic tranquility of a Fall Foliage cruise along the Hudson River, participants embraced moments of peace and connection. Special thanks to John and Andrea Forbes for making this joyful day possible. Adding to the festivities, a special concert by two students from **The Juilliard School** filled the air with harmony. At the same time, the lively traditions of Oktoberfest brought our clients together in a colorful and energetic celebration with pretzel making, games and dancing. With corporate volunteer support from **Christine Valmy International School for Esthetics, Skin Care & Makeup** and **Regeneron**, these enriching experiences promote well-being and foster community and lasting memories for all involved.



Photos: From left to right, a Christine Valmy International School student provides a makeup session for a GuildCare client; Two GuildCare clients are seated by a window enjoying the view during the Fall Foliage cruise, while a third client stands nearby, enjoying the music from the ship's DJ.

In addition to seasonal celebrations, our GuildCare Adult Day Health Care program offers comprehensive healthcare and a full day of activities with centers in New York City, Albany, Buffalo, and Niagara Falls. Our expert team provides 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.



Photos: From left to right, a volunteer helps a GuildCare client make a pretzel during the Oktoberfest celebration; A GuildCare client enjoys the beautiful music performed by a harpist and cellist from The Juilliard School.

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](#).

A Meaningful Partnership

Lighthouse Guild is pleased to announce the continuation of our partnership with the **Blavatnik Family Foundation**, which has awarded us a substantial three-year grant to enhance our impactful youth programs. This transformative support will enable us to fully realize and expand our initiatives,

including the Saturday Youth Skills Program, Saturday Youth Transition Program, Summer Pathways Program, Insightful Saturdays Virtual Program, Tech Pals, Career Preparation, and Adaptive Athletic activities. We are excited about the opportunities this grant will create for our youth and are committed to making a meaningful difference in their lives.



Photo: Six excited participants of our Summer Pathways Program pose in front of Lincoln Center during a career field trip along with Youth Services Manager Jaydan Mitchell on the far right and a Lighthouse Guild volunteer, second from the left.

Events

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

November 13 | Tech In-Session: Exploring YouTube | New York City

November 14 | Ask the TVI: Music: How it Can Enrich Your Child's Life as a Visually Impaired Youth | Online

November 18 | Tele-Support Talk: The Power of Social Support for Individuals Who are Blind or Visually Impaired | Online

November 19 | Tech Talk: iPhone 16 Product Review | Online

Your support is vital for Lighthouse Guild, enabling us to provide essential programs and services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired – helping them secure employment, exercise their civil rights, forge their own paths, and 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**.

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



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