

A Chicago Lighthouse
Publication

the Beam

September 2009 ■ Volume 9 Number 1



A SPECIAL THANK YOU

REMEMBERING ADO

A story of a remarkable woman and friend of the Lighthouse



The Chicago Lighthouse would not be able to do the work we do without the support of donors, community leaders, our employees, our clients, and their families. We would like to dedicate this issue to people like Ado O'Donnell, who have cared enough to share.

THANK YOU!

Over our many decades of service to people dealing with blindness and visual impairment, The Chicago Lighthouse is fortunate to be remembered by many of our past patients and clients when they pass away. While losing a friend or family member is never easy, we are grateful that so many people ask that, in lieu of flowers, that they would appreciate a memorial donation to the Lighthouse instead. Occasionally, the passing of one of our friends inspires an extraordinary display of generosity, a wonderful tribute to the memory of someone special. Adonai O'Donnell, who passed away last Autumn, certainly was one such person.

'Ado' O'Donnell was a patient at the Rosenbloom Low Vision Rehabilitation Service for several years, where she received treatment for her failing eyesight. Losing her vision was a particularly difficult experience for Mrs. O'Donnell, who was well known by her large circle of family and friends for her independent and outgoing personality.

Ado was married to Tom for 57 years and together they raised six children. A few years after her youngest started grade school, Ado headed off to school herself, earned a degree in accounting, and passed the CPA exam. She then opened her own accounting practice and ran it enthusiastically and successfully for 26 years until 2008. Ado handled thousands of income tax returns for 26 years and every return, be it a large corporate or a small individual return, received her close personal attention.

Her struggle with Age-Related Macular Degeneration, unfortunately, made it increasingly difficult for her to enjoy reading or to perform her duties as a CPA. Yet, her naturally upbeat personality and strong faith (Mrs. O'Donnell was a devout Catholic) helped her to deal with the challenges that AMD posed, and she never stopped hoping that a cure would be found.



ABOVE: Mrs. O'Donnell's family visited the Lighthouse in July to honor her memory.

Mrs. O'Donnell passed in the early days of October, 2008, and her family, at her request, asked that donations be made to The Lighthouse in her memory. Over the next several weeks, we received many gifts in the name of Mrs. O'Donnell; in fact, at the time of this writing, Ado's thoughtful request has resulted in over \$1600 in memorial gifts, from over 40 of her friends, relatives, and past business clients. This is an exceptional response, and merited a special acknowledgment.

On July 11th, 2009, over 20 of Mrs. O'Donnell's family members, including some who drove from as far away as Iowa, came to the Lighthouse for the unveiling of a special memorial brick in our garden for Ado. Stories about her naturally generous spirit were told, and new friendships were made between the O'Donnell family and the Lighthouse. We are proud to remember someone who, by remembering us and the work that we do, has allowed others living with visual impairment to benefit. Rest in peace, Mrs. O'Donnell.

LIGHTHOUSE NOW OFFERS LOW VISION SERVICES AT NORTHWESTERN

In an effort to reach out to more patients who will experience vision loss in the years ahead, The Chicago Lighthouse is partnering with the Department of Ophthalmology/Northwestern Medical Faculty Foundation to inaugurate a new, state-of-the-art, comprehensive low vision clinic.

The facility, which was officially dedicated on August 31, is located at 675 E. St. Clair, 15th Floor, Department of Ophthalmology, Galter Pavilion. Hours are 8 to 5 Monday and Wednesday; 1 to 5 on Friday.

Staffing the clinic will be two low vision specialists, Drs. Carol Barron and Karen Squier. Among services available to patients will be psychological support, prescription low vision devices and occupational therapy (both in office and at home). The satellite clinic was made possible through the efforts of Dr. Lee Jampol, chair of Northwestern's Department of Ophthalmology, and Lighthouse board member Sandy Forsythe and her husband Rick. We appreciate their strong vote of confidence in The Chicago Lighthouse and our low vision services.

To make an appointment or to obtain additional information, call (312) 997-3686.



From Executive Director Dr. Janet Szlyk

This issue of the Beam coincides with a significant milestone for me, the first anniversary of my assuming the role of Executive Director. Thanks to your encouragement and support, I admit to being as enthusiastic about the Lighthouse as the day I started!

It has been both a memorable and challenging year as our agency, like every other non-profit, has had to cope with shrinking financial resources as a result of the worst economic slowdown since the Great Depression.

But with the "can do" attitude of our talented staff, the Lighthouse has tightened its belt and made some adjustments in order to maintain our quality programs and continue with our plan to enlarge our facility.

With some careful financial planning, the Lighthouse has been able to resume its expansion and rehabilitation project, which will ensure that we will

be able to meet the needs of people who are blind or visually impaired for years to come. We anticipate completing the project by the end of this year.

Not only have all our existing programs continued to thrive, but we have been able to introduce some exciting new ventures. Here are just a few. The Lighthouse has introduced a new comprehensive low vision rehabilitation clinic within the Department of Ophthalmology at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago's Streeterville area. Our low vision research area is undertaking some innovative new projects. We unveiled a new radio program to Chicago listeners, "The Beacon," to champion the interests of people who are blind or have other disabilities. Our website has been redesigned to offer more timely information in a visually appealing, reader friendly format, and will allow the Lighthouse to sell its products online.

And more will happen in the months ahead. The completion of the expansion project will not only enable us to grow current programs but add new ones. As a result, the Lighthouse's store will be streamlined into a state-of-the-art technology and resource center that offers the latest in assistive devices to individuals coping with vision loss.

I look forward to reporting on these in future letters as well as on our website and other vehicles.

DRY EYE

By Elise Corgiat O.D.

There are a variety of symptoms of dry eye that can be occurring for various reasons. Dry eyes can lead to vision fluctuation, frustration and a reduced quality of life. A definition of dry eye was formulated by a Delphi Panel, which is a group of international dry eye experts. Dry eye was defined as "a multifactorial disease of the tears and ocular surface that results in symptoms of discomfort, visual disturbance and tear film instability with potential damage to the ocular surface. It's accompanied by increased osmolarity of the tear film and inflammation of the ocular surface." Your eye care professional can guide you to a more stable tear layer with recommendations and treatment options after a thorough case history and examination.

Symptoms of dry eye include blurred or fluctuating vision, itchy eyes, burning, excessive tearing, gritty feeling or foreign body sensation. These symptoms are often worsened by wind, heat, cigarette or cigar smoke, lack of sleep, stress, increased caffeine intake, and extended periods of reading or computer use.

Some of the various reasons one

may experience dry eyes are sex, age, bacteria, clogged glands, inward growing eyelashes, systemic conditions, side effects of some oral medications, poor eating habits/ malnutrition, loose eye lids, a history of LASIK, a history of radiation, environment, and certain visual tasks. Females are more commonly affected due to estrogen fluctuation during the menstrual cycle, pregnancy and post menopause. Systemic conditions related to connective tissue disease and dysfunctional immune system, such as Sjogrens Syndrome, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Wegner's Granulomatosis, or Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, will cause a person to have dry eyes. Excessive staphylococcus bacteria in the eyelashes can lead to ocular surface inflammation and cause tear film instability. Deficiency in vitamin A and omega 3 fatty acid (linolenic acid) may also lead to symptoms of dry eyes. An environment with an air conditioning or heating unit that consistently expels air will cause a person to experience symptoms of dry eye. Certain visual tasks such as extended periods of reading, computer work, or prolonged near work of any kind may lead a person to dry eyes. Side effects of some oral medications such as diuretics, antihistamines, birth control pills, beta-blockers, phenothiazines, and atropine may also be the underlying reason a person has dry eyes.

Treatment for dry eyes is determined on an individual basis. Recommendations may be in the form of using certain artificial tear eye drops on a regular basis, ointments, omega 3 fatty acid supplements, or prescriptions. Your eye care professional may prescribe topical dry eye relief such as antibiotic ointments, low dose topical steroid drops, cyclosporine ophthalmic emulsion or oral antibiotics. Surgical options may also be discussed such as punctual plugs, eyelid surgery to tighten the lids or permanently occlude the natural drainage area. Other recommendations to increase the tear film stability and protect the ocular surface would be using a humidifier, decreasing caffeine intake, moisture goggles, or addressing underlying systemic issues with the primary care physician. Dryness related to contact lens use may have different lines of therapy. Please consult with your eye care professional if you experience these dry eye symptoms to gain recommendations on how to correct your problem.

This feature comes courtesy of The Dr. Alfred A. Rosenbloom Low Vision Rehabilitation Service, contributing articles related to eye health and vision loss to The Beam and other Lighthouse Publications.

Lighthouse NEWS and EVENTS

2009 LIGHTHOUSE SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

30 outstanding students from across the U.S. who are blind or visually impaired are a step closer to realizing their dreams of completing a college education, thanks to scholarship awards from The Chicago Lighthouse for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired.

The \$5,000, \$2,500, \$2,000, \$1,000 and \$500 awards were presented to the students during a festive ice cream social, courtesy of Oberweis Dairy, held at the Lighthouse on July 25th.

Donors this year included the Appelbaum Family Foundation; Sanford A. and Renee D. Bank; Berner Charitable & Scholarship Foundation; Mark J. Cargerman; Chicago Lighthouse Associate Board; Roseanne Cohen; William L. and Eileen Conaghan; Sarah and Fred Flosi; Carl and Maggie Konrath; Mills Family Charitable Foundation; Dr. Joel and Mrs. Roberta Kaplan; Michael and Mary Kathryn Panitch; Drs. Janet P. Szlyk and Jeffrey Jackson; June Thompson and Sye and Lois Unell.

Another highlight of the event was the showing of a special video extolling the success of the program and the achievements of past recipients, narrated by Chicago broadcast giant, the late John Callaway of WTTW-TV.

LIGHTHOUSE TAKES ACTION DURING STATE BUDGET CRISIS

Noting the serious consequences that state budget cuts would have on Lighthouse services, the agency swung into action this past spring and orchestrated a mass letter-writing campaign to Illinois lawmakers, urging that critical programs be spared and alternative solutions found.

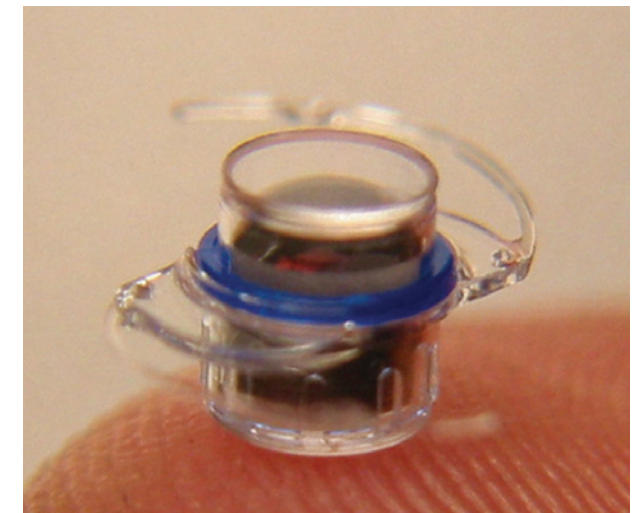
Lighthouse Executive Director Dr. Janet Szlyk conducted an emergency town hall meeting in June to discuss the crisis with staff and clients, recommending that they contact their legislators. To assist in this effort, PR Director Dominic Calabrese developed sample letters and provided contact information for specific lawmakers, including Governor Quinn, House Speaker Madigan, Senate President Cullerton as well as the Republican leadership.

In addition, the Lighthouse's collective voice was heard through interviews with such media outlets as ABC 7, the Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago Tribune and Chicago Journal. While the state budget matter hasn't been fully resolved at this point, the Lighthouse, because of its careful financial planning and generous donors, has been able to continue providing quality services to our community.

NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE

A New York Times article about an innovative new telescope to help people with severely degenerated retinas was one of the major media placements highlighting The Chicago Lighthouse in recent months.

In the July 19th edition of the Times, Dr. Janet Szlyk and the Lighthouse were showcased as national experts in an article, "Better Vision, With a Telescope Inside the Eye." The article discussed a new device, a small telescope that has been successfully implanted in the eyes of people with severely degenerated retinas enabling them to read and perform other tasks.



Dr. Szlyk was on an advisory panel to the Food and Drug Administration that recommended approval of the device. She noted that it holds much promise for patients who suffer from end-stage, age-related macular degeneration, or AMD. Her intent is for the Lighthouse to become the primary center in the Midwest for providing rehabilitative services to patients who utilize the new telescope.

BLIND AID CONCERT

On Saturday July 18th, The Chicago Lighthouse and Aveda sponsored a free concert in the Hancock Center's Garden Plaza featuring performances by The Blisters, The Bismarcks, and Velcro Lewis Group.

Aveda offered massages, makeovers and facials in their store for a donation to The Chicago Lighthouse. A number of local retailers donated items for a raffle at the end of the event. The concert was profiled on WBBM-AM and included interviews with Dan Dwyer and Andy Slater, two of the musicians participating in the event who are visually impaired.



ABOVE: Concert-goers watch The Blisters' performance at the Lighthouse's first annual Blind Aid Awareness Benefit. Spencer Tweedy, son of Wilco's Jeff Tweedy, is The Blister's drummer. Special thanks to the Tweedy-Miller family for their participation, as well as all of the bands, volunteers, and attendees who showed their support.

To receive our most up-to-date Lighthouse happenings, sign up for our E-News at: www.thechicagolighthouse.org.

Upcoming Events

CONNECT WITH US Join our online community for the latest events and happenings on our new website, www.chicagolighthouse.org. While continuing to meet accessibility standards, the new site includes up-to-date information about our expanded programs and services, interactive discussion forums, videos, and more. Join our network by subscribing to an e-newsletter of interest to you. We look forward to your feedback at webmaster@chicagolighthouse.org.

Building Update

The Chicago Lighthouse Growing For Service Project, which will expand and renovate the agency to better serve people who are blind or visually impaired, has recently resumed construction of the 12,000 square feet addition and is scheduled for completion by the end of this year. Now, with most of the funds raised, the Lighthouse is less than \$300,000 from meeting The Kresge Challenge for a grant of \$500,000 towards the Growing For Service Project. If the Lighthouse reaches the goal by December 31, 2009, the Kresge Foundation will award the grant to complete the \$5 million project. All gifts before the end of the year will be matched – please consider giving today.

To make a special gift to Growing For Service, contact Jen Miller, at (312) 997-3643.

Uncorked

Wednesday, September 23rd
6:00pm - 9:00pm
Scoozi!, 410 W. Huron, Chicago
Tickets: \$125 each or ten for \$1,000

Includes wine tasting from vineyards around the world, wine throughout the evening, as well as a dinner buffet of wood fired pizzas, salads, pastas and desserts. Must be 21 years of age.

Purchase tickets online now at www.chicagolighthouse.org for this 'can't miss' event of the season, hosted by the Lighthouse's Young Philanthropists Board. Proceeds will benefit The Chicago Lighthouse and the Illinois Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (IPVI).

The Shopping Benefit

Thursday, October 29th
Any Bloomingdales Store
Tickets are \$10 each

Enjoy a day of savings, entertainment, fashion events, and more! All proceeds from ticket sales will go to the Lighthouse, in addition to a matching contribution by Bloomingdales.

For more information on Lighthouse events, contact Special Events at (312) 997-3656. Receive the most up-to-date event news by subscribing to our Lighthouse Events e-newsletter at www.chicagolighthouse.org.



THE CHICAGO LIGHTHOUSE
for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired
1850 West Roosevelt Road
Chicago, IL 60608-1228

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 9119
Chicago, IL

On the Cover: Thanks to Lighthouse friend Alderman Robert Fioretti, a group of 20 Lighthouse clients and employees were able to attend a special performance of “Cavalia.” The show included a backstage visit with the performers.