



SEEING WHAT'S  
**POSSIBLE**

the **Beam**



From the President and Chief Executive Officer  
—Janet P. Szlyk, PhD

Dear Friends,

“Community” has always been at the heart of The Chicago Lighthouse. We were founded by a community of women and have dedicated our 114 years

of service to Chicago’s underserved communities. At The Lighthouse, everyone—regardless of age, race, or disability—is welcome.

Throughout this unprecedented pandemic, our community has come together in the best possible ways. As “stay-at-home” orders were being issued in March, our IT and management teams worked around-the-clock securing licenses and assistive technology equipment so that many of our employees with disabilities could continue working from home. Birth-to-Three Program Senior Director Marla Garstka personally appealed to state officials for the ability to provide remote therapies. Though physically separated, our community rallied online, donating more than \$40,000 on #GivingTuesdayNow, guaranteeing our clients would have our assistance when they needed it most.

As individuals, we stepped up for each other. To help some of the youngest members of our community, our in-house Art Therapist created and distributed kits to Preschool and Children’s De-

velopment Center students. When one of our employees, who is visually impaired, needed a safe place to live, Human Resources Senior Vice President Jeanette Bonzani helped secure a new apartment for her and her family. As some staff members who are blind remained homebound, their colleagues went to grocery stores and pharmacies for necessities. This is what we mean when we say we are a “Community of Care.”

Meanwhile, we continue to expand our community. Our pivot to remote delivery has opened up possibilities to reach people across the region and even out of state. We are forging new partnerships to help even more people receive our comprehensive low vision care and gain access to cutting-edge assistive technology. And, as you will read, we are in the preliminary stages of creating affordable housing that is fully accessible for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Community can mean many different things: individuals connected by a shared purpose; a resource to serve a group of people; a fellowship of shared values and goals. This year, The Chicago Lighthouse community was all of those things and more. Thank you for being a part of it!





# COMING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITY

THAT'S *Amore!*

On September 12, The Chicago Lighthouse community came together both in-person and online for our first virtual “Seeing What’s Possible” Gala.

The theme, “That’s Amore,” shone through Tuscan-themed décor, as our Lighthouse patio transformed into an Italian terrazza. Thirty-four people celebrated in-person (socially distanced, of course) while 150 joined from places all over the country. The hour-long program featured inspirational stories from clients and other

entertainment. The event, which featured live fund-a-need and auction bidding, raised more than \$260,000, with donations coming from around the country.

“Even though we couldn’t attend in-person, the ‘Seeing What’s Possible’ Gala gave us so much inspiration and hope for what we can all achieve,” says Laura Selipsky, who attended the event from her home in Seattle. “It was so amazing to see The Chicago Lighthouse marshal its community so inventively.”

“The Seeing What’s Possible Gala gave us so much inspiration and hope for what we can all achieve. —Laura Selipsky, who “attended” from Seattle”



ABOVE: Outgoing Board Chair Gary Rich, Dr. Janet Szlyk, and Michelle Rich (from left) celebrated The Lighthouse’s numerous accomplishments during his tenure.

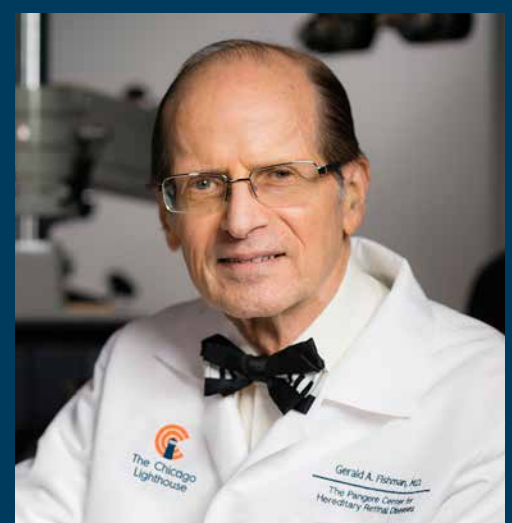


TOP RIGHT: Kevin Sullivan, and Ray L. Beacon lead the live auction and fund-a-need.



BELOW RIGHT: Lighthouse supporters, staff, and board members enjoy a delicious Italian meal.

**AT THE GALA,** The Chicago Lighthouse honored two people for their dedicated service to our community. After 39 years of shepherding The Lighthouse’s finances through a period of tremendous growth, CFO **Mary Lynne Januszewski** is moving on to another position. In addition, **Dr. Gerald Fishman**, director of the Pangere Center for Inherited Retinal Diseases, retired after five decades of providing world-class research and patient care at The Chicago Lighthouse and The University of Illinois at Chicago combined.





# BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY

As a co-founder and principal of Brinshore Development, David Brint has helped build more than 7,500 housing units in 15 states throughout the U.S., including several dozen affordable housing developments in the Chicago area. **The firm's latest venture, however, is more than another job. It's a cause close to his and his family's heart.**

David's youngest son, Alan, has been blind since birth. Through Alan's participation in The Lighthouse's Birth-to-Three Early Intervention Program, the entire Brint extended family came to know our life-changing work. Alan's mother, Betsy, and aunt, Sally Schwartz, have served for more than 20 years on our

Artist's rendering of our proposed accessible residence building.



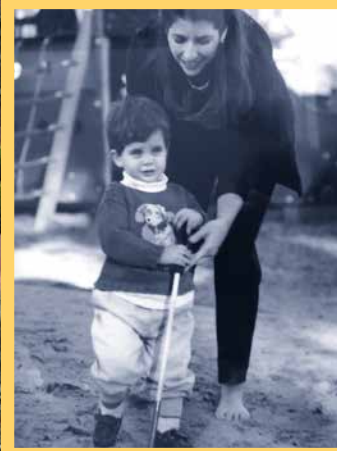
Board Chairman for Foundation Fighting Blindness, helped him understand the barriers many members of the blind community face as they try to live independently. **About four years ago, Brint began formulating a plan, in collaboration with Dr. Szlyk, to create affordable, accessible housing for people with visual disabilities.**

They envisioned a multi-unit, mixed-income building created to address the challenges people who are blind or visually impaired often face. The units would include amenities and fixtures such as advanced assistive technology designed especially for people with low vision.

That vision drew one step closer to reality this spring when Chicago's Department of Housing preliminarily approved a package of tax credits that will help pave the way for construction of a new 76-unit building adjacent to The Chicago Lighthouse.

Architectural firm Landon Bone and Baker is currently creating the building's design, which will also include a ground-level retail complex that will provide job opportunities for people who are blind or visually impaired. Once the design and budget are completed, the permitting process will begin. If all goes smoothly, groundbreaking could begin as early as next spring.

**"People with visual impairments often struggle to find independent living opportunities in safe neighborhoods near their work," David says. "This is a perfect opportunity to satisfy all of those challenges and support Chicago's efforts to be a more accessible, inclusive city."**



*The Brint family has been deeply involved with The Chicago Lighthouse ever since the birth of son Alan (at right), who is blind due to Leber congenital amaurosis. INSET: As a toddler, Alan, with his mother, Betsy, practices orientation and mobility skills learned in our Birth-to-Three Program.*

Associate Board, a group of philanthropic-minded North Shore residents supporting Lighthouse North in Glenview. (Sally is currently its President.) David's nearly 10 years of service on The Chicago Lighthouse Board, as well as his work serving as



*Tyler and Brie, 10-year old twins, are making a difference selling hand-made, fully customizable beaded mask holders with a portion of every sale going to support The Chicago Lighthouse North.*

## BEADS AND GOOD DEEDS

*When life deals you masks, make some mask holders.*

**Ten-year-old twins Tyler and Brie turned their extra time spent at home during the pandemic into a thriving business with a social purpose.** The two Highland Park girls founded Twin Beads by Tyler and Brie over the summer with the express purpose of making and selling fashionable, beaded mask holders.

More than just a way to make money, the girls are using their business to give back. Through September and October, the girls donated a portion of the proceeds cost to Lighthouse North in Glenview, where the twins' mother, Alison, and grandmother, Jo Ann, serve on our Associate Board. **To date, the girls have raised more than \$1,000 for The Chicago Lighthouse North.**

Mask holders can be customized with personal messages, names, and colors and can be shipped directly to your home. Each holder costs \$15 and is available online through their Facebook and Instagram pages, Twin Beads by Tyler and Brie. The mask holders are also for sale at Forest and Found in Highland Park, and both Chicago Lighthouse Tools for Living stores in Chicago and Glenview.



**Join us online on December 1, 2020, for #GivingTuesday!** Contributions made through this annual social fundraiser will help us continue to provide our Programs and services to people who are blind, visually impaired, disabled and Veterans. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for more details!



# FINDING A GLOBAL COMMUNITY

by Kalari Girtley-Jackson

I love to travel, but I have never had the opportunity to go abroad. It has always been a dream of mine. **That dream came true earlier this year when I traveled to Spain for a once-in-a-lifetime experience.**

Sports has always been a place for me to find a sense of community. When I was younger, I began playing beep baseball, which is an adaptive version of America's pastime for people who are blind or visually impaired. As soon as I began to play, I was hooked. Through the game, I met others who were determined not to let a disability define them. As a member of the National Beep Baseball League's Chicago Comets, I have met people like me from all over the world.

My passion for sports was noticed by The Chicago Lighthouse, where I work as part of their Customer Service and Marketing Teams. They invited me to be part of a once in a lifetime opportunity in Barcelona last February. OrCam, which makes an assistive technology device that translates printed text into spoken words, had recently signed global soccer superstar Lionel Messi to be a spokesperson for their MyEye Pro, and they invited partner representatives from all over the world for a private reception. Thanks to The Lighthouse and their partnership with the company, I was one of two athletes representing the United States!

In addition to meeting Messi, I encountered athletes from all over the world. Like me, they were blind, and, like me, they loved sports. **Even though we didn't speak the same language, our shared love of adaptive sports created an immediate connection.** We found other similarities, as well. We all use VoiceOver on our iPhones, for instance. We are definitely more alike than different.

**Meeting these other athletes, I am now part of a larger team that is connected for life—a global community, so to speak. We are united in the goal of making the world more accessible and inclusive for people who are blind or visually impaired.**



*Thanks to OrCam, Chicago Lighthouse employee Kalari traveled to Barcelona to meet global soccer superstar Lionel Messi.*

## RACHELLE'S HOMECOMING



*Preschool graduate Rachelle and her former Orientation & Mobility Instructor Jaret Bozigian explore the familiar ground of The Lighthouse. Inset: Rachelle, back in 2016, receiving inclusive art therapy while enrolled in our Preschool.*

Nothing makes us happier than when a community member returns for a visit. Recently, Rachelle, who graduated from our Preschool in 2017, returned to show off how much she had grown, both physically and developmentally.

Rachelle came to The Lighthouse as a four-year-old, newly adopted from Haiti. Shortly after she arrived, Jaret, our in-house Orientation & Mobility instructor began working with the young girl. He supplied her with a small white cane, which she took to immediately, moving up and down the Preschool hallways, using the handrail as a guide.

When Rachelle, whose mother, Karin, serves on our Board, returned to The Lighthouse in September, she had a larger cane and even more confidence. She happily greeted School Principal, Lee Burklund, and showed off her skills for Jaret. She even found some familiar tactile stickers on the handrail she had used as landmark cues to identify her location in the building. "One, two, three bumps," she said. "It's almost like an 'A.'"

**"I hadn't really seen her since she graduated," says Jaret. "I was amazed. She really understands the techniques of how to use the cane. Her mother told me she uses it to walk the dog, which is hard for some adults. She's incredible."**

**PLEASE CONSIDER A PLANNED GIFT!** You can help the thousands of people we serve each year AND have the satisfaction of knowing people with disabilities in the future will benefit from your generosity today. For example, with an estate gift of \$50,000 to our Endowment Campaign, at a 4% annual investment return, you can fund a \$2,000 gift in perpetuity to The Lighthouse. Please contact Jen Miller, Chief Development Officer, at (312) 997-3643 or [jennifer.miller@chicagolighthouse.org](mailto:jennifer.miller@chicagolighthouse.org) to learn more.



# The Chicago Lighthouse

1850 W. Roosevelt Road • Chicago, IL 60608-1288

## UPCOMING EVENTS

[www.chicagolighthouse.org/events](http://www.chicagolighthouse.org/events)

**5th Annual Raising the Stakes for Vision:  
Poker & Casino Night**

**Thursday, March 4th**

[www.chicagolighthouse.org/event/casino](http://www.chicagolighthouse.org/event/casino)

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