



The Chicago
Lighthouse

the BEAM

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An **EPIC** Undertaking



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

Dear Friends,

As our community slowly re-opens, this seems a good time to reflect on how we can further shape the future. Without a doubt, our physical world has become more accessible in the 30-plus years since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. As we move even further into the 21st century, we are proudly leading the way in making the online world more usable for people who are blind or visually impaired.

In recent months, our Digital Accessible Experience (DAX) specialists have begun working with organizations such as the Chicago Housing Authority and Briteweb to optimize their digital properties' use by people with disabilities. In a Q&A, DAX Lead Accessibility Analyst Jose Martinez explains how his first-hand insights as a user who is blind benefits companies and other organizations.

Among the organizations our DAX team has worked with is Epic,

developer of the most widely-used health records software. When our longtime partner, UI Health, was transitioning to Epic, they encouraged the company to work with us to ensure the software was optimized for our Call Center Agents who are blind or visually impaired. For many months, The Chicago Lighthouse's DAX analysts and Call Center operations teams worked side-by-side with Epic and UI Health to make the software more intuitive and accessible.

Already, more than 15 of our UI Health Call Center Agents who are blind or visually impaired have become official Medical Schedulers, thanks to these accessibility updates. Furthermore, this work will extend far beyond our walls, as it opens up opportunities for Epic users who are blind or visually impaired throughout the world.

We are all truly thankful to UI Health, which has been an outstanding partner for the past six years, and to Epic for bringing this important work to fruition. Together, we are truly making the world a more inclusive and accessible place.



Thanks to a partnership between The Chicago Lighthouse, UI Health and Epic, people who are blind throughout the world, including our own UI Health Agents, will have access to career advancement opportunities within the healthcare field.

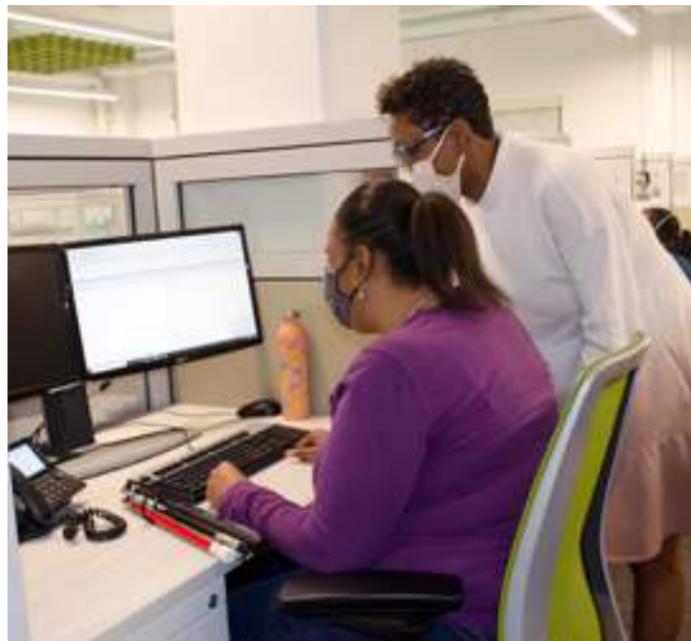
An EPIC Undertaking

The Chicago Lighthouse works with UI Health and Epic to create opportunities for people who are blind or visually impaired.

For six years, Chicago Lighthouse employee Kendra White has answered calls and provided general information to patients contacting UI Health, the University of Illinois Hospital & Health Sciences System. Kendra, who is blind, excelled at her work and wanted to advance in her career. **Unfortunately, outdated technology that was incompatible with the screen-reading software Kendra used to navigate digital services meant that on occasions when a caller wanted to schedule an appointment, Kendra had to pass the call off to a sighted colleague.**

Earlier this year, Kendra, who has a Master of Social Work degree from Dominican University, proudly changed her title to “Medical Scheduler,” and then soon thereafter to “Accessibility Support Specialist,” thanks to a partnership between The Chicago Lighthouse, UI Health, and Epic, the company behind the most widely-used and comprehensive health records software. Over several months, the three organizations worked together to optimize Epic for users who are blind or visually impaired. As a long-time client of The Chicago Lighthouse’s social service enterprise Call Centers, UI Health executives wanted to be sure the social service organization’s employees who are blind or visually impaired could seamlessly transition to Epic, which the health system had selected for its new platform.

The upgrade, which rolled out earlier this year, will open



“With more opportunities for career advancement, I can better support myself and family, and put my education and experience to better use.”—UI Health Accessibility Support Specialist Kendra White (shown with her supervisor, Chenita Jackson)

up healthcare employment opportunities for people with low vision throughout the world.

“With the implementation of Epic’s enhanced usability, I am happy to see my career develop and take off,” says Kendra, who is now training other users with visual impairments on how to use the software. “With more opportunities for career advancement, I can better support myself and family, and put my education and experience to better use.”

The partnership came about when UI Health began using Epic. At UI Health’s suggestion, The Lighthouse’s Digital Accessible Experience (DAX) team helped optimise the platform for Lighthouse employees who are blind or visually

impaired. Over the course of several months, DAX analysts worked side-by-side with UI Health and Epic staff to bring the project to fruition.

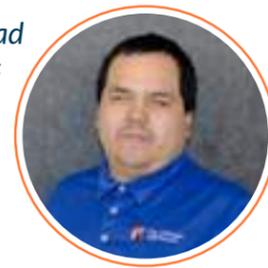
For Jose Martinez, who started out as a Call Center Agent before becoming the Lead Analyst for DAX, knowing he is helping improve the lives of others who are also blind or visually impaired is particularly gratifying.

“Our lives depend on how well things are coded,” Jose says. “Many times in my life, I have encountered websites that say they are accessible, but are not compatible with the screen reader I use. In those cases, they may as well be inaccessible.”

See related interview with Jose inside.

QA WITH DAX

Jose Martinez, CPACC Lead Accessibility Analyst, explains why accessibility matters.



Making the Digital World **WORK** for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

Imagine trying to find a job, get a date or buy almost anything without the internet. Even before the COVID pandemic, the internet was an essential tool for daily life; it has only become more critical over the past year. Yet, 98% of U.S.-based web pages in 2019 failed to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines according to accessiBe's 2019 Web Accessibility Report.

Since 2019, The Chicago Lighthouse's Digital Accessible Experience (DAX) has helped businesses, government agencies, and other organizations make their digital properties more accessible for users who are blind or visually impaired. Not only are DAX consultants certified in web accessibility, as people who are blind or visually impaired, they also bring years of first-hand experience to each project.

In the following Q&A, DAX Lead Accessibility Analyst Jose Martinez, who is completely blind, discusses why this work is personally important and the impact accessibility can have for businesses' bottom lines.

Why is digital accessibility and usability important for people who are blind or visually impaired? What kinds of issues have you encountered?

There are a lot of things we have to overcome compared with people who are sighted. Doing many of the things I like to do – video games, audio editing, music – has been hard because until recently, there were no best practices to translate the graphical information to something I could perceive and use. I had to find costly workarounds to follow my passions. Thankfully, that is changing.

What sets DAX apart from others offering accessibility services?

We provide automated testing as well as manual accessibility and usability testing. One of our biggest strengths is that

we are all native (blind) users. We have been finding ways to efficiently navigate websites in our own personal lives. We have many, many years of practical experience when it comes to knowing if something works well.

When should organizations begin implementing accessibility?

From the beginning. By incorporating accessibility into the design process, it will be easier to make accessibility a priority for future updates or new products. It is almost inevitable that someone with a disability is going to want to use your product. What better way to ensure they can than by including them from the very beginning?

If you are interested in learning more about DAX consulting services, please contact Phil Yatvin at (312) 997-1688 or phil.yatvin@chicagolighthouse.org.



DR. MATCHINSKI HONORED WITH VISION EXCELLENCE AWARD



Dr. Tracy Matchinski

Congratulations to **DR. TRACY MATCHINSKI**, Optometrist in our Low Vision Clinic, for receiving the Vision Excellence Award from the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness! An outstanding optometrist with 25 years of experience, Dr. Matchinski was recognized for her commitment to low vision education and the development of eye health resources in the U.S. and around the world. Her contributions to the field of low vision include helping to place equipment at public clinics and optometry schools worldwide and providing strategic leadership to support and build the practice of optometry across the globe. Dr. Matchinski is well deserving of this recognition for all her efforts on behalf of our patients and many others internationally.

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU for being a part of our community of care. These success stories would not be possible without your support!

SPECIAL FATHER'S DAY GIFT FROM ONE COMMUNITY TO ANOTHER

WITHIN CHICAGO LIGHTHOUSE INDUSTRIES, OUR TALENTED EMPLOYEES WHO ARE BLIND CAN ASSEMBLE AN AVERAGE OF OVER 1,000 CLOCKS A DAY. It's no wonder that these clocks can be found all across the world. When searching for unique gift items, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum in Florida learned of our customizable clocks. The museum, which is located on the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation in Florida, was immediately interested and purchased 150 customized clocks. The clocks, which will be given as Father's Day gifts to members of the Seminole Tribe from their Council Leader, feature a beautiful, colorful patchwork design which is used repeatedly within the culture. Ancestors of the Seminoles have lived in what is now the Southeastern United States for thousands of years. We are grateful for their community's support of our mission!



To learn more or to purchase a customizable clock, visit: chicagolighthouseclocks.com

Our Lighthouse Industries employees rely on their sense of touch to assemble each clock.



Nancy and David Huber

SPOTLIGHTING BOARD MEMBER DAVID HUBER

For David Huber, involvement on our Board is personal. Due to a detached retina, he lost the vision in his right eye nearly 30 years ago. "It was a scary time," he says. "I have a high amount of empathy for anyone that has a vision impairment."

As a former business owner and accomplished financial advisor, David has a passion for helping others achieve their dreams. When a client introduced him to The Lighthouse in 2008, he immediately felt a connection to our mission and was eager to get involved. He has served on our Board ever since.

During his 10th year as a Board Member, David's former company, Huber Financial Advisors, LLC, was the presenting sponsor of our Lighthouses on the Mag Mile™ art display, which highlighted the works of artists with and without disabilities. The art initiative advocated for access and inclusion in all areas of life, including employment. "As someone who is visually impaired and was still able to establish his own business, I know first-hand what people with disabilities can bring to the table and what they can achieve if given the chance to do so," says David.

We honored David and his wife, Nancy with the Beacon of Light Award at our Seeing What's Possible Gala on June 10th. Their dedication to our organization continues to inspire others and enables us to change countless lives. "Anybody can be a beacon," says David. "Choose your path, become involved and help and be that guiding light."

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. It is easier than you think to make a gift through your estate or trust. For more information, please contact Jen Miller, Chief Development Officer, at (312) 997-3643 or