

LEGACY



The Chicago
Lighthouse



Offering a
helping hand
now and for
generations
to come.

Envision the Future Endowment Campaign
Summer 2021

Dear Friends,

We are excited to announce that The Chicago Lighthouse has officially launched the *Envision the Future* Endowment Campaign! **This is a three-year campaign in which we need to raise \$7 million to preserve the long-time viability of our programs and services today and into the future.**

Some of you may be wondering why we even need an Endowment Campaign. After all, The Lighthouse has been around since 1906. Each year, we continue to expand our reach, impact, and the ways in which we help people.

The reasons for our Endowment Campaign are many, but we have highlighted some of the ones we are most passionate about here:

First, we want to make sure that The Lighthouse exists for the future generations who are blind, visually impaired, have additional disabilities, and are Veterans. During the pandemic, many first-time clients and patients reached out to us for assistance. Many of these new patients and clients are economically at-risk, and consistent with our mission, we never turn anyone away who cannot afford our services. As a result, now more than ever, we need to guarantee that The Lighthouse is around for the long-term to assist everyone who needs our help. Our Endowment Campaign seeks to do just that.

Second, our Endowment Campaign will allow The Lighthouse to address and meet the needs of growing populations who are visually impaired, who have additional disabilities, and who are Veterans. For instance, age-related macular degeneration is increasing exponentially in our mature populations. Providing innovative

services to enhance and meet this need will require significant resources. This is simply not possible without a more substantial Endowment Fund.

Our Endowment Campaign's success is critical for the families and clients we serve and for the long-term financial health of The Lighthouse. **As a result, we have each personally made multi-year pledges for the life of the Campaign to show our commitment to achieving this very important goal.**

We hope you will join us in participating in the Campaign. We are well on our way to our \$7 million goal, but we need your help. There is no gift too small! You can also help us by remembering The Lighthouse in your estate plan. We thank you in advance if you are able to support the Campaign.

Together, we can ensure the long-term future of our beloved Lighthouse.

All the best,



Robert Clarke
Board Chair



Caroline Grossinger
Chair, *Envision the Future*
Endowment Campaign



Big Heart, Bigger Vision

“It was like a miracle,” John Coleman says. Nearly 60 years after losing vision in his eye, John Coleman once again had clear vision, all thanks to a connection he made at The Chicago Lighthouse.

John was ten years old when a BB gun accident severely damaged his left eye. Specialist after specialist told him the damage was irreparable. Accordingly, John, like so many others in the 1940s, learned to live with his visual impairment. He developed his own personal accommodations, even bluffing his way into an Air Force pilot-training program at 17 (he left the program before his first flight). He went on to marry, have children and founded his own company—and the idea of restoring his vision faded to the back of his mind.

Instead, John dedicated his time to assisting others who were blind or visually impaired. He joined Lions Clubs International, where he helped organizations (including The Chicago Lighthouse) dedicated to improving the lives of people with vision impairments. As Governor of the Chicago-area district, he led several community-improvement initiatives, including one to establish The William Strickfadden Assistive Devices Program that supplied people with products to facilitate independent living (and was the basis for our Tools for Living® stores) at The Chicago Lighthouse. (He is currently the Sight and Sound Chairman for the Burbank Lions Club, which provides glasses and hearing aids to members of the community.)

“Whenever and however I can give back, I do, especially to those who are blind or have visual impairments,” Coleman says.

In that spirit, John has devoted countless hours to

helping The Lighthouse. He also acted as a liaison between The Lions and The Lighthouse, and he enlisted his wife Pat and son Chris (both of whom are also Lions) to help out whenever possible.

Perhaps most importantly, John’s dedication to helping those with visual impairments impressed former Lighthouse Executive Director Jim Kesteloot, who recruited John to The Lighthouse Board in 2004. By that time, John was in his late 60s, and he had pretty much given up hope of ever having vision in both eyes again.

Fellow Board member and ophthalmologist Dr. Thomas Deutsch felt differently. “He told me, ‘You’ve got a good retina,’” John says.

“The BB tore at my iris and damaged the lens and muscle, but he said it could be corrected.” After Dr. Deutsch personally performed a three-hour corneal-implant surgery, John’s left eye was functioning again. **“It was nothing short of life-changing,”** John says now.

John has recently retired after seventeen years from The Chicago Lighthouse Board at age 86. Still, he remains committed to our longevity more than ever. This year, he and his wife Pat contributed to our *Envision the Future* Endowment Campaign, ensuring future generations can benefit from our life-changing work.

“The Lighthouse has been such an important part of my life and the lives of so many others,” John says. “I want to make sure its services are available for all of the people who need them far into the future.”



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—John Coleman

In Honor of Abby

Proud
Grandparents
Who Made a
Difference at
The Lighthouse



PRESERVING THE LIGHTHOUSE'S LONG-TERM VIABILITY

When their granddaughter, Abby, was born without eyes in 2005, Jon and Mary weren't sure what to do.

A friend of a friend, who has a son who is blind, immediately recommended The Chicago Lighthouse's Birth-to-Three Program as a resource for guidance and support.

As soon as the family contacted us, Birth-to-Three Early Intervention Program Director Marla Garstka began to reassure them. **"Our Program had successfully helped thousands of infants and toddlers since 1974, teaching them how to navigate a world for the sighted,"** Marla says **"I told them with confidence that Abby would be in good hands."**

"As soon as we learned of the Program's success with other children, we began to feel better," Mary says. Marla then worked with Abby, teaching her how to reach for objects even though she could not see them and helping her achieve important early childhood developmental milestones. "I don't know what life would be like without The Lighthouse," Mary says. "With Marla and The Lighthouse's help, Abby was able to thrive, and our family also learned how to advocate for her."

In 2006, Mary and Jon arranged to make a recurring monthly donation to The Lighthouse, and have continued their monthly contributions since that time. They wanted to be sure other children had the same opportunities as their granddaugh-



ter. "It started out as pure gratitude to pay back what they had done for us," Mary says. "I want The Lighthouse to always be there. I don't know what kids like Abby would do without its programs."

Today, Abby just finished her freshman year in high school. She enjoys taking piano lessons and animatedly discussing politics and current events with her grandmother. Her favorite subjects are math (she says she loves solving quadratic equations!), and she especially enjoys her Spanish class. She earned A's in all of her classes. In the future, Abby may participate in our Youth Transition Program, where she can learn more new skills and meet other teens who share her disability.

In appreciation for Mary and Jon's ongoing support, we have a plaque identifying an area in our school as "Abby's Place." Mary wanted the plaque to symbolize all of the incredible "Abbys" out there whose lives can be transformed with The Lighthouse's assistance. "I know every penny I give to The Lighthouse is going to help a child like Abby," she says proudly.



Thanks to their unwavering support over the past 15 years, we have helped countless children who are blind or visually impaired throughout the Chicago area. We cannot thank Mary and Jon enough for their generosity over the years! And we love hearing about how Abby continues to thrive.

LEFT: Abby and her sister Sunny share a smile. TOP: "With The Lighthouse's help, Abby was able to thrive," says Abby's grandmother, Mary. RIGHT: A plaque commemorating "Abby's Place" in our school recognizes Jon and Mary's ongoing support.

LIGHT on the Other End of the Line

For Anne, that first call to The Chicago Lighthouse was the most difficult she had ever made. As a Senior diagnosed with macular degeneration, Anne had no idea what awaited her. Would she be told there was no hope? Would she have to give up her favorite activities?

“I was not happy about my condition. In fact, I was scared to death,” says Anne.

At The Chicago Lighthouse, we understand that fear, which is why we have people like Joseph working in our Low Vision Call Center. **Joseph, who has low vision himself, knew exactly how Anne felt.** Responding with empathy and encouragement, Joseph helped Anne understand that her happiness was not tied to her eyesight.

“I find that’s what people need,” says Joseph. “If you have somebody encouraging you and telling you something can be done, like you have at The Lighthouse, it makes you believe you can do it. That’s the greatest thing about my job, giving people hope.”

Through several calls before her appointment, Joseph’s calm counsel helped Anne stay positive. Joseph addressed all of her questions and concerns, and explained the numerous services The Lighthouse offered, including psychological counseling and assistive technology training. On the day of her appointment, Anne made a point of meeting her new friend in person.

The second she saw Joseph coming toward her with his white cane, Anne immediately knew she could manage the challenge of vision loss. **“I saw that he had confidence in himself—and I knew I, too, could have that confidence and learn to live with the vision I have left,”** Anne says.

As Anne continues to manage her future with vision loss, she is thankful that Joseph will continue to be there to offer support and hopes she can do the same for others.



“That’s the greatest thing about my job, giving people hope.

—Joseph, Call Center Agent

“He is a wonderful, wonderful man. I will never forget him,” Anne says. “He inspired me, and I want to help others. And I am so glad The Lighthouse is there to help me as well with moving forward in my life. **Calling The Lighthouse was the hardest call I ever made, but also by far the best!”**

A COMMITMENT THAT LASTS **Beyond a Lifetime**

For Steve Adelman, the decision to include The Chicago Lighthouse in his estate plan was an easy one. “I understand the importance of providing financially for your family, but it’s important to fund the causes that are important to you as well,” Steve says, adding: “If you supported a charitable organization when you were alive, it only makes sense to help it continue its incredible work after you’re gone.”

A former partner at Locke Lord LLP in Chicago, Steve first started working with The Lighthouse in 1976 to consult on a labor and employment issue. Several years thereafter, he became the organization’s corporate counsel. As The Lighthouse grew as both a social service organization and social enterprise business, Steve advised on human resources, employment, and other areas. Steve and his wife Pam had included The Lighthouse as one of the most substantial charitable bequests in their estate plan for many years, but when he retired from practicing law in May 2020, they chose to increase their contribution to further ensure our ability to help future generations.



“The Lighthouse has always been far more than a client to me,” Steve says. “It was and is near and dear to my heart well beyond my role as legal counsel.”

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—Steve Adelman

Though his father lived with low vision, Steve was unacquainted with The Lighthouse prior to becoming a consultant here in the 70s. He was immediately impressed with The Lighthouse’s dedication to helping people who are blind or visually impaired achieve their highest potential.

“Everyone that I worked with at The Lighthouse always appeared to be deeply connected to the clients,” Steve says. “They have always been at the forefront of finding ways to help people who are blind or visually impaired be more independent.”

Throughout Steve’s time working with The Lighthouse, the agency’s focus on our mission of helping people who are blind or visually impaired build confidence has never faltered. From providing employees who are blind or visually impaired with fair wages and comprehensive benefits to developing programs that help people with disabilities live independently, The Lighthouse has repeatedly demonstrated that it is an organization with a vision. It’s a vision that has impressed Steve for over 40 years.

“People at The Lighthouse are always looking to the future, even as they are working in the present,” Steve says. **“In a way, that’s what estate planning is as well.”**

If you are interested in including The Chicago Lighthouse in your estate plan, please contact Jen Miller, Chief Development Officer, at (312) 997-3643 or jennifer.miller@chicagolighthouse.org.

For more information, please visit: chicagolighthouse.org/endowment

Please join our incredible community of donors who are investing in the future for people who are blind, visually impaired, disabled or Veterans!



A campaign to **ensure** The Chicago Lighthouse will continue to provide our essential **services** to people who are blind, visually impaired, disabled, and Veterans **for generations to come.**

For more information or to make a gift to the Endowment Campaign, please call or write us at:

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