



The Chicago  
Lighthouse

# the Beam

Fall 2023 ■ Volume 24 Number 2

Building an **INCLUSIVE** Community





# The Chicago Lighthouse

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

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Chicago, IL

## UPCOMING EVENTS

[chicagolighthouse.org/events](https://chicagolighthouse.org/events)

**Sips & Sweets for Sight**  
Thursday, February 1, 2024

**Raising the Stakes for Vision:  
Poker & Casino Night**  
Thursday, February 29, 2024

**Jazz Night with Lisa Hilton**  
Wednesday, March 12, 2024

**Seeing What's Possible Annual Gala**  
Friday, May 31, 2024



**DOUBLE YOUR GIFT IN DECEMBER!**  
[See details inside.](#)



## From the President and Chief Executive Officer—Janet P. Szlyk, Ph.D.

It is with great pride and gratitude that I introduce to The Lighthouse community our recently elected Board Chair, Dr. Thomas Deutsch. An ophthalmologist by training, Dr. Deutsch is the first eye-care professional to lead our Board in several years. Below, I have asked Dr. Deutsch to outline his vision for the agency over his three-year term.

### Dear Lighthouse Community,

**Hello. I am extremely excited to have been elected Chairman of the Board of Directors of The Chicago Lighthouse.** I have been a member of the Board for more than 25 years and have watched the Lighthouse grow and thrive during that time. The mission of helping people who are blind, visually impaired, disabled and Veterans, which resonates with all of us, is a huge motivator of my involvement on the Board.

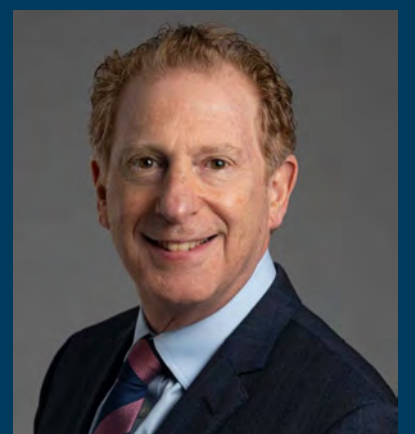
This is an exciting time to be a part of The Chicago Lighthouse's community. In Summer 2024, we will officially open The Foglia Residences, which will provide safe, affordable, accessible housing for Veterans and people with disabilities. We are expanding our Social Enterprise initiatives, which offer employment for our clients and also generate revenues that support our social service programs. And we have an active scientific research program that aims to support our clients.

My role is to facilitate the success of the talented staff that Dr. Szlyk leads, through the work of the equally talented members of the Board of Directors. And, we will raise the profile of The

Lighthouse, not just in Chicago, but around the country and world as a leader in providing cutting-edge programs that help members of our mission community thrive. **Most of all, I want everyone to know what The Lighthouse stands for: helping people from some of our most underserved communities build confidence and live as independently and inclusively as possible.**

Wishing you the best this holiday season,

**Thomas Deutsch, M.D.**  
Chairman, The Board of Directors  
The Chicago Lighthouse



**ON THE COVER:** Mike McCarthy proudly participates in our 2nd Annual Rise to Shine Run & Walk.





# Building an INCLUSIVE Community

More than 400 people turn out to support health, community and inclusion raising \$100,000 to support The Chicago Lighthouse.

Paul Rink had never been in this position before. At 77, he was lining up to compete in his first-ever 5K run. Nervous as he was, Paul was ready. He had been training with a neighbor since May, who would also act as his guide—Paul is blind—throughout the course.

What motivates a septuagenarian to train for a race such as The Chicago Lighthouse’s Rise to Shine Run & Walk? In Paul’s case, it was two things. First, it was the organization. Paul has been a member of The Lighthouse’s board for 40 years, and this was another way to show his support. Second, was a commitment to never stop trying new things.

Paul, who placed third in his age group, was one of more than 400 people who turned out on a crisp October morning for the second annual event, which celebrates health, community and inclusion within the Illinois Medical District and throughout Chicago.

In addition to supporting The Lighthouse’s life-changing programs and services, the event supports the Chicago Central Lions Club, of which many Lighthouse staff are members. It also



**“Just because you hit a certain age, it doesn’t mean you have to slow down or you can’t do new things for yourself.”**

—Board Member Paul Rink ran his first-ever 5K at our Rise to Shine inclusive race with guide Tim Casady.

celebrates both organizations’ efforts—along with community partners and civic leaders who either entered the race, put together teams or served as volunteers—to create a community of inclusion within the growing IMD. The theme of inclusion continued after the race at a Fitness Fest for All that featured a kids’ race, recovery massages, vision and hearing screenings, entertainment and free breakfast tacos.

With support from the IMD, Chicago Alderman and Vice Mayor Walter Burnett, runners from around Chicagoland and area health care organizations, schools and area nonprofits like Children of Peace School and Urban Autism Solutions, the Rise to Shine Run & Walk is becoming known as an event that welcomes everyone of all abilities to participate on their own terms.

“My son [who is on the autism spectrum] ran in it last year and he loved it, and our staff who participated loved it. It’s a great team-building experience and it is going to become an annual event for us,” says Mike Tracey, co-founder and community outreach manager of Urban Autism Solutions.

We couldn’t have said it better ourselves. Congratulations to all who participated in the Rise to Shine Run & Walk and thank you to our partners and sponsors for supporting health, community and inclusion in the IMD and throughout Chicago.

## THEY ROSE. THEY SHONE.



Chicago Lighthouse employee Yaneira Diaz competed in her second-ever 5K. This year, her brother and boyfriend participated alongside her.



Felix Coleman, Jr., who is a participant in our Adult Living Skills program has been running in races for 40 years.



The Lebatore family celebrated the first birthday of early intervention participant Shay with a morning walk that included his parents, sister and grandparents.



Liam Boyle raised more than \$5,300 in memory of his brother and Lighthouse employee, Neal, who passed away earlier this year.





## LANCE FINDS NEW FRIENDS AND HIS CONFIDENCE

As a teenager with a visual impairment, Lance is generally reserved in unfamiliar groups and places. He speaks quietly and is more content to observe than be the center of attention. On his first day as a new participant in our Youth Transition Program's *Photography for All* session, he was understandably anxious. He was going to be asked to speak about himself in front of a group of others he barely knew.

But as other program participants told their stories, Lance began to recognize some of himself in them. **Like Lance, all of the other participants had visual impairments, and many had never had the opportunity to explore the city independent of their families.** As the day wore on, Lance became more comfortable. "They were certainly a group of characters," he says. "And I'm a bit of a character, too. I felt like I found my people."

Over the next few weeks, Lance and his fellow participants learned how to use public transit maps and schedules to navigate the city. They bonded as they practiced cooking and other independent living skills and learned to use an iPad's adaptive features to take photographs. With each day, Lance's confidence increased ... so much so that Lance had no problem walking the runway in front of 270 strangers at our FLAIR fashion fundraiser in September.

Lance is now in his senior year of high school and is looking forward to what lies ahead. "I feel better traveling, and I feel more confident in myself," he says. **"I see a lot more opportunities in front of me. My mailbox is filling up with college brochures, and I'm getting ready to apply."**

## SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED OUR COUNTRY

Going into our second decade of helping Veterans find post-service confidence and security through employment, The Lighthouse is enhancing its Veterans' services. Learnus Ross, who went through the Veterans Employment Empowerment Program, was recently tapped to become the organization's first full-time Veterans Coordinator. **For Learnus, the position is more of a calling than a job.**

"I love to help people and grow relationships," Learnus says. "I have a giving heart, and this will definitely be my legacy."

**Learnus will use his first-hand knowledge of The Lighthouse's programs to provide Veteran clients with valuable resources, job training, employment placement and ongoing support to promote career advancement.** In addition, Learnus will be looking to organize special events for our Veteran clients to come together and share experiences and hobbies.

One of those events took place in late September when Learnus and several of The Lighthouse's Veteran employees with vision impairments visited an exhibit at the Pritzker Military Museum & Library. The museum was hosting a special exhibit, "Tet and The Battle of Hue," that featured three-dimensional renderings and touchpoint audio descriptions of photos taken by *Stars and Stripes* photographer John Olson.

Barry Jones, a Navy Veteran who works in Chicago Lighthouse Industries, said the experience was incredibly moving. "It reminds you how important those guys next to you are. They are relying on you, and you are counting on them," he said. "I wish more people could see exhibits like these to get a better idea of what it's like to serve."



*Learnus Ross and Barry Jones experience a tactile exhibit at the Pritzker Military Museum & Library.*



**Double your gift this December! Your generosity will be matched one-for-one, up to \$25,000, by a Chicago Lighthouse board member and his wife, Dick and Patricia Schnadig. Go online to [chicagolighthouse.org/donate](https://chicagolighthouse.org/donate) or use this QR code to make your gift now!**





## SANDY'S VIEW

# BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY THROUGH VOLUNTEER WORK

Since 2005 when Chicagoland Reading Information Service (CRIS) Radio began broadcasting from The Chicago Lighthouse, volunteers have been its backbone. **We have readers of all ages, backgrounds and skills. They dedicate thousands of hours each year to read the day's news and other printed material, so that some 19,000 listeners with vision loss or other print disabilities can be connected and informed about their community.**

Every volunteer has a unique reason for providing this service. Some have family members with vision loss. Others simply want to refine their voiceover skills. Many simply love reading and want to share their joy. Some readers have volunteered for decades, while others came to us just last year. No matter the reason or amount of time they've been with us, they have created a vibrant and inclusive community.

This community of volunteers came together once again this fall, forming the "Sandy's Readers" team for the Rise to Shine Run & Walk. They raised more than \$2,600 for The Lighthouse's programs and came out on that Sunday to support our mission and community.

Thank you CRIS Radio readers—and all of those who help further our mission as volunteers—for making our community what it is.

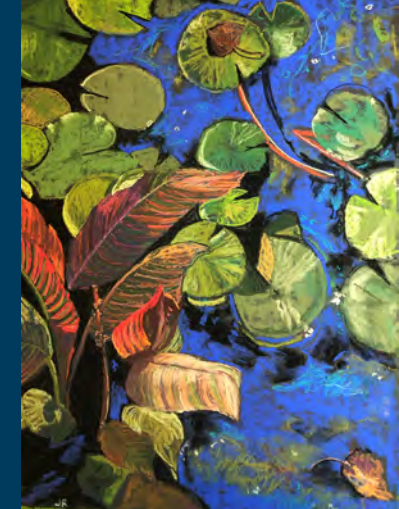


*Sandy Murillo is an Associate Producer at Chicago Lighthouse Media and a graduate of our Birth-to-Three Program. "Sandy's View" will be a reoccurring feature in our future Beam newsletters.*

# GIVING BACK WITH GRATITUDE

Jerri Ross was traveling in Italy with her husband Mike, and, despite her beautiful surroundings, she was depressed. Diagnosed with a rare genetic retinal disease, Jerri was told she would go blind, and there was no help available. She had already given up her passion —painting and illustration— and found herself at her lowest point.

*Artwork by Jerri Ross.*



A chance meeting with Lighthouse Industries Board Member Ted Mazola on that vacation lifted her spirits. Ted informed Jerri about The Chicago Lighthouse and suggested making an appointment at its Low Vision Clinic. **"I saw the low vision doctor and my whole world changed. She handed me a monocle and I read for the first time in six years," Jerri says.**

Since then, Jerri has flourished. The Lighthouse's assistive technology specialists outfitted her with a magnifier to read grocery labels and a camera that attaches to her TV so she can continue creating art. Occupational therapist Laura Hayes trained Jerri to use different parts of her eye to compensate for her macular and retinal damage.

In gratitude, Jerri made a philanthropic gift to The Lighthouse's Low Vision Clinic from her donor advised fund. She hopes others will join her in supporting The Lighthouse so more people can benefit from the same comprehensive services that help Jerri.

# THE FOGLIA RESIDENCES ARE TAKING SHAPE

We are on track to meet our Summer 2024 completion target for The Foglia Residences, our 76-unit, income-qualifying residential building that will provide safe, affordable, accessible housing for people with disabilities and Veterans.

Our application process will begin in early 2024. To facilitate that process, our residential management partner, Leasing & Management Company, Inc., has created a 24-hour information hotline to answer any questions about application guidelines and requirements at (877) 334-1990.



*Architect Jack Schroeder from LBBA leads Lighthouse donors, executives and Board members on a hard hat tour of the building.*

**PLEASE CONSIDER A PLANNED GIFT!** Many of our most loyal contributors choose to fund our mission by including The Chicago Lighthouse in their estate plans. Planned gifts offer you the flexibility to maintain your current financial security while also providing long-term support for individuals who are blind, visually impaired, disabled and Veterans. To learn more about estate gift opportunities at The Chicago Lighthouse, **contact Lora Nickels at [lora.nickels@chicagolighthouse.org](mailto:lora.nickels@chicagolighthouse.org) or (312) 997-3643.**