

insight

Spring 2018

"If Not Us, Who?"

Sight Center Mission Makes a Difference for Older Adults

The famous quote "If not us, who? If not now, when?" has been attributed to Rabbi Hillel, Robert Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, Barack Obama, and now Stacey Butts. The Sight Center's Executive Director asked herself these questions after receiving alarming news back in September 2017.

The state agency Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) informed The Sight Center that new eligibility standards would soon go into effect for the state's Independent Living for Older Adults program. This program, which has been in operation for over 20 years, helps older adults who experience permanent vision loss. These intensive services, most of which are provided in a client's own home, teach lifelong skills that empower independence.

The announced changes would have affected people 55 years and older who have mild to moderate vision impairment (best corrected visual acuity is between 20/40 and 20/200), representing nearly 70% of older adults who access services at The Sight Center. Many in the affected group experience age-related macular degeneration or have health-related conditions like diabetic retinopathy. Most have lived their entire lives with typical vision and are now facing life without driving, reading the newspaper, identifying medications and managing personal finances.



"We couldn't just sit back and accept the changes" said Ms. Butts, adding "Our mission demanded that we speak out on behalf of those we serve." After unsuccessfully appealing to the state agency, The Sight Center informed elected officials and local media of the projected impact on older adults who are visually impaired. The heightened awareness led to new conversations and creative solutions that allowed the state to dial back eligibility restrictions to once again include people with moderate vision impairment. Reflecting on her decision, Ms. Butts said "We did it for people like Rhonda Shaw."

Not Just Numbers: Rhonda Shaw's Story

Rhonda Shaw is one of the people who would have no longer qualified for services. While her best corrected visual acuity is 20/40 (mild vision impairment), it is the combination of eye disorders that have prevented this 60-year old Bluffton resident from being able to drive, read, travel safely at night and recognize faces. ► **CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE**



"If Not Us, Who? If Not Now, When?" (continued)

Born with a severe astigmatism, ocular albinism, contrast sensitivity and myopia, all of which can cause visual challenges, Rhonda's life was further complicated by the onset of macular degeneration in her dominant eye. As a result, Rhonda lost her job and eventually gave up her driver's license in 2002. For the next 15 years Rhonda's world grew smaller as her confidence shrank. Problems with depth perception, which led to several falls during the day, turned a normal flight of stairs into a dangerous obstacle at night.



Rhonda Shaw

While attending a low-vision event in Lima, Rhonda met representatives from The Sight Center. With support from the state's Independent Living program, The Sight Center empowered Rhonda to broaden her world and to take charge of her own life. With proper lighting and magnification and training on how to use a white cane, she began to do the things she hadn't done in years.

Reflecting on the experience, Rhonda says "The Sight Center understood it wasn't just about the numbers in my visual acuity but how these conditions affect my ability to stay independent." Rhonda is once again exploring her world on her terms. "Until you gave me a cane I didn't have a life after dark" she said, adding "I don't have to be afraid anymore."

Working To Bridge The Gap

While people like Rhonda may still be able to access state-funded services thanks to the efforts of The Sight Center, not all are as fortunate. The state's new eligibility standards will affect older adults with mild vision impairment, those who are just beginning to lose their vision. "We help a lot of people make the transition early in the vision loss process" said Stacey Butts, "but the state's decision puts enormous pressure on us to find new resources." Summing it up with a famous quote, Ms. Butts said "It's our mission, and if not us, who?" ■



Who? Maybe You?

For 95 years, The Sight Center has relied on the generosity of people just like you. Every single donation of time, talent and treasure has helped us enrich the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired. If you, or someone you know, can support the work we do, raise your hand today! Contact Tim Tegge, Development Coordinator by email at ttegge@sightcentertoledo.org or by phone at 419-720-3937 x105.

Large Print Calendars



The Sight Center

1002 Garden Lake Parkway, Toledo, Ohio 43614
(419) 720-EYES (3937) ♦ Toll-free (800) 624-8378 ♦ www.SightCenterToledo.org

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Thanks to generous support from First Insurance Group and First Federal Wealth Management, Sight Center clients can request a free 24x18 inch 2018 calendar while they last.

Call Tim at 419-720-3937 x105.

Calendars can also be purchased for \$5 each in The Shop at The Sight Center.



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Better together.

10 Vision Impairment Myths & Misconceptions

In the spirit of David Letterman, we've compiled our own "Top 10 List"



10 Fewer people are losing their sight.

In reality, the number is growing due to age-related and health-related conditions such as diabetic retinopathy and macular degeneration, two of the leading causes of permanent vision loss in the country.

9 "Legally blind" is the same thing as "blind".

Not so! Legal blindness is a level of vision loss used to determine eligibility for certain benefits. This refers to a medically diagnosed central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the best possible correction, and/or a visual field of 20 degrees or less.

8 The Sight Center is a nonprofit, so all services are free.

We rely on a variety of funding sources to provide free or low-cost vision rehabilitation, but we couldn't do the work we do without private donations, fundraisers and bequests.

7 Insurance pays for white canes and white cane training.

Wrong! Ironically, while health insurance may pay for a wheel-chair for someone who loses a leg to diabetes, they don't cover a white cane or white cane training if a person loses their vision to the same disease.

6 Government programs pay for all vision rehabilitation services offered at The Sight Center.

While government programs have traditionally played an important role, they have been steadily declining and narrowing their focus.

5 Technology will solve everything!

Not so! Technology is opening many doors and providing new opportunities, but some of the best solutions are traditional. Keeping an open mind to both is important!

4 There's a special device that will make life just like it was before vision loss.

While there are many great products and valuable tools, there is seldom a single device that will make everything better. Most people rely on a portfolio of tools, training, tricks and techniques to live independently with vision loss.

3 It's OK to pet someone's guide dog.

Stop! Petting a guide dog is like grabbing a carpenter's hammer. Never assume you can pet a guide dog unless you've asked the dog's human. An on-duty guide dog should never be distracted from its important work.

2 "Can't see" means "Can't work".

Incorrect! Richard Bernstein is an elected judge in Michigan's Supreme Court. Russell Shaffer is Director of Brand Strategy, Outreach & Benchmarking at Walmart. They are examples of people who are blind excelling in their careers. With reasonable accommodations, people with little or no sight can be successful in most any field they choose.

And the #1 Vision Loss Misconception...

1 It's the end of the road when your eye doctor says "There's nothing else we can do".

Not true! Even if your vision can no longer be corrected, your eye doctor can and should refer you to The Sight Center, where you can learn to work, play and live independently without the vision you're used to. That's why our motto is "We don't change vision - We change lives!"

► **Call 419-720-EYES (3937) and SEE what The Sight Center can do for you!**



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018

EyEvent

7TH ANNUAL SIGNATURE GALA

7th Annual Fundraising Gala More Appetizing Than Ever

The Sight Center is pleased to present the 7th Annual Signature EyEvent Gala. The theme, "Dining in the Dark, An Evening of Taste, Sounds and Touch" will once again offer guests an exclusive opportunity to experience a "sensory smorgasbord" while relying on non-visual techniques and the other four senses. Guests will enjoy a portion of the dinner guided by a Sight Center Vision Rehabilitation Specialist in simulated darkness. Join WTOL Meteorologist Chris Vickers and 250 Sight Center supporters for our biggest fundraiser of the year!



TM

The Sight Center
of northwest ohio

Presents

7th ANNUAL EYE EVENT GALA

"Dining In The Dark, An Evening of Taste, Sounds & Touch"

Wednesday, April 25, 2018 @ 6 PM

The Pinnacle, 1772 Indian Wood Circle, Maumee, Ohio

Featuring

Chris Vickers, Master of Ceremonies

Special Dining Experience

Silent & Live Auction

Client Art Exhibit

Celebration of Changing Lives

Tickets

\$90 Per Ticket

Group Packages Available

Visit www.SightCenterToledo.org

Call 419-720-3937 or 1-800-624-8378

**All proceeds advance our mission to empower
independence for people who are blind or visually impaired**

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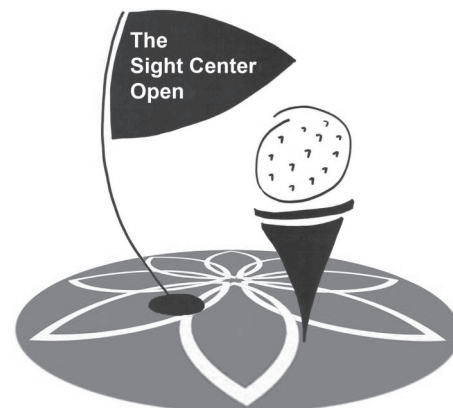
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Putt Your Money Where Your Mouth Is!

Calling All Golfers to the 2018 Sight Center Open

SAVE THE DATE! The Sight Center Open returns to a course near you on Wednesday, June 27 at Whiteford Valley Golf Course. This 18-hole scramble format fundraiser will be fun and challenging for pro's and novices alike, with food, drinks, awards, raffle prizes, and The Sight Center's trademark experiential elements. Registration is open to the public for \$75 per golfer or \$300 per foursome. Corporate sponsorships are also available.



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The Sight Center Open Golf Scramble

Wednesday, June 27, 2018

1 PM Shotgun start (11 AM registration/warm-up)

Whiteford Valley Golf Club, 7980 Beck Road, Ottawa Lake MI

\$300/team or \$75/golfer

Lunch, dinner & prizes included

Call Tim at 419-720-3937 x105

Visit www.SightCenterToledo.org/Events

Low Vision Support Group Meets Monthly

Join this monthly, client-directed group designed to share common experiences, learn about resources, find solutions to vision-related difficulties, hear from area professionals and much more. Meetings are the 2nd Friday each month from 10 AM-12 PM. There is no cost to attend.

► **INTERESTED? Contact Jill Hunt at 419-720-3937 x114 or jhunt@SightCenterToledo.org**

Feel the Force at Mud Hens' Star Wars Night

The Sight Center Selected as Charity Partner for Star Wars Jersey Auction

Join us May 26 at Fifth Third Field as the Toledo Mud Hens give the shirts off their backs! The Sight Center is the Charity Partner for the annual Star Wars Night and specialty theme jersey auction. Buy tickets from The Sight Center and be part of the group! Bid on a jersey and help even more!



Take me out to the ballgame

Take me to Fifth-Third Field

Order my tickets and tell all my friends

Buy a Hens Jersey, The Sight Center wins!

Let's root, root, root for the home team

And support our friends without sight

So bring one, two, three friends along

To Mud Hens' Star Wars Night!



Mud Hens' Star Wars Night & Specialty Jersey Auction

Saturday, May 26 @ 7:00 PM

Fifth Third Field, Toledo

\$15 per ticket

Call Tim at 419-720-3937 x105

www.SightCenterToledo.org/Events

“Seeing AI” Is Believing!

New Artificial Intelligence App A Real Game-Changer

Recently, in the midst of a busy day, I sorted my mail, read a handwritten note from my husband, and made sure the can I was about to open was the organic tomatoes needed for my dinner recipe. You may be wondering why I’m sharing the routine tasks of my day with you. The answer is simple. As a person with a visual impairment, these tasks may have taken me longer, or in the case of reading a handwritten note, would have been impossible, prior to the advent of Microsoft’s Seeing AI.



According to Microsoft, Seeing AI is "a research project that brings together the power of the cloud and AI (artificial intelligence) to deliver an intelligent app, designed to help you navigate your day." The talking camera app is free and is available from the Apple Store. This app uses artificial intelligence to describe text, people and objects in the environment. The app also identifies currency, colors and can alert a person to the amount of light in the environment using a series of fluctuating tones.

The Seeing AI app has several functional modes, or channels as Microsoft refers to them. Each channel can assist a person with a specific type of task. These include:

- ⦿ **Short Text** — Speaks text as soon as it appears in front of the camera
- ⦿ **Documents** — Provides audio guidance to capture a printed page, and recognizes the text, along with its original formatting
- ⦿ **Products** — Gives audio beeps to help locate barcodes and scans them to identify products
- ⦿ **People** — Recognizes friends and describes people around you, including their emotions
- ⦿ **Scenes** — An experimental feature to describe the scene around you
- ⦿ **Currency** — Identify currency bills when paying with cash
- ⦿ **Light** — Generate an audible tone corresponding to the brightness in your surroundings
- ⦿ **Color** — Describes the perceived color
- ⦿ **Handwriting** — Reads handwritten text

While there are other apps that can assist with most of these tasks, Seeing AI is the first app to combine them into one, easy to use, application. For the first time, I'm able to read handwritten cards and notes from my family and friends. The easy efficiency of the app has certainly given me greater independence with routine daily tasks. For me, this app has been a real game changer!

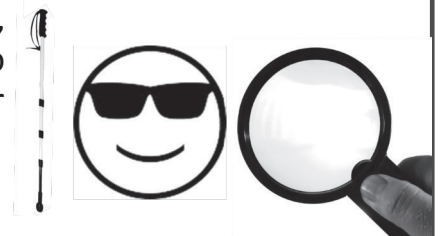
— Submitted by Stacy Bassett, Assistive Technology Specialist, The Sight Center of Northwest Ohio

- **Interested in a comprehensive assistive technology evaluation?. Contact Jill Hunt, LSW at jhunt@SightCenterToledo.org or 419-720-3937 x114 for more information.**

The Gift of a Century!

As we look towards the 100th anniversary of The Sight Center, please think about the impact you could make. Your own personal “once in a century” gift will ensure that The Sight Center will be here for future generations. Memorial gifts, first-time donations, legacy bequests and even 3rd-party fundraisers are great ways to leave your mark. No other organization does what The Sight Center does for people who live with permanent vision loss!

- **Call Tim at 419-720-3937 x105 to discuss your ideas!**



Adapt and Overcome: A Former Soldier's New Mission

When Jen Reynolds learned she had Stargardt disease, she didn't crumble. She went into action. Driven by an innate optimistic personality and fueled by eight years of military training, this 38-year-old Lucas County resident saw the diagnosis as her new mission.

After a lifetime of perfect vision, Jen started noticing subtle changes a couple years ago. While taking American Sign Language classes to become an interpreter, she would occasionally miss some of the signs. "It's like there had been a missing piece of what I had seen" she recalls. Another incident occurred while applying eyeliner. "It was harder to see what I was doing when looking through my right eye only" said Jen.

On October 20, 2017, Jen scheduled a routine eye exam. Thinking she finally needed glasses after 39 years, she was confused when her eye doctor ran so many tests. That's when she heard the words "Hereditary Macular Dystrophy" and was referred to a retinal specialist.



Eager to research the condition and learn as much as she could, Jen determined she has an early onset form of macular degeneration called Stargardt disease. This self-diagnosis was confirmed by her retinal specialist the following week. Stargardts, which usually manifests itself in early childhood, typically leads to legal blindness. "I have decided to remain positive through all of this" she states, adding "I know I can adapt and overcome as the military has taught me."

A recent visit to The Sight Center opened Jen's eyes to a new world of low vision devices, adaptive techniques, and assistive technology solutions. "I want to start learning as much as I can now while I still have more vision" she said, adding "I'm already planning on getting an iPhone!"

Looking at the world through her new eyes and her same old optimistic lenses, Jen Reynolds said "This journey has introduced me to many new amazing people I would have otherwise never met", quipping "I only SEE that as a gift!" ■

Better Than "Better Late Than Never"

Early Intervention Recognized as Best Practice

Several reputable national organizations recognize the importance of early intervention for people experiencing permanent vision loss.

The **American Academy of Ophthalmology** recommends rehabilitation early in the process of vision loss when people still have some usable vision.

① www.aao.org/low-vision-and-vision-rehab

The **Centers for Disease Control & Prevention** (CDC) also asserts the importance of this approach. Two of the CDC's Healthy People 2020 Adult Vision objectives are to increase the use of vision rehabilitation services and assistive/adaptive devices by people with visual impairments (The State of Vision, Aging and Public Health in America;

① www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/pdf/vision_brief.pdf ■

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95 Candles Burn Brightly!

[1923-2018]

In May The Sight Center celebrates 95 years of service to the blind and visually impaired community in Northwest Ohio. With a century of service clearly in sight, we pause to look back at our roots.

Founded in 1923 under the name Toledo Society for the Blind, the first executive secretary was Dr. Harry Will, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Toledo. Initially housed in the former Adams Street Mission building, the Society bought a house at 718 Michigan Street with money left by glass industrialist Edward Drummond Libbey.

Financial support in the early years came from the Lion's Club, Ohio Commission for the Blind, LaSalle and Koch Department Store, Security Savings Bank and Trust, Toledo Council of Catholic Women, Girl Scouts, the estate of Mrs. Noah Swayne, and the Toledo Committee of the American Foundation for the Blind, which sponsored a visit by Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan Macy in 1925.

► **The Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections in the William S. Carlson Library at the University of Toledo has an extensive collection of our archives open for all to explore!**

Don't Be Late For Dinner

Our biggest fundraiser of the year!

Wednesday, April 25 @ 6 PM

(See page 4 for complete details)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018

EyeEvent

7TH ANNUAL SIGNATURE GALA