

LIONS LOW VISION CENTERS, INC.

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Macular Degeneration and Low Vision Awareness Month

The American Academy of Ophthalmologists, celebrating their 30th anniversary, 1980-2010, recently announced the observance of February as Macular Degeneration and Low Vision Awareness month. They urge Americans to prevent age-related eye problems, by having routine medical eye examinations, and to learn about the benefits low vision rehabilitation if they have visual impairment. Early diagnosis and treatment will slow the progression of Macular Degeneration.

What is low vision? Simply stated, a person with low vision does not have enough useable vision to accomplish the tasks of daily living such as: taking medication, reading, using a computer, writing a check, watching television, cooking a meal, dialing a phone, or crossing the street. There is no cure for low vision, but there are ways to manage and cope with this complicated medical condition.

Low vision can be caused by a specific condition, such as

macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, cataracts, glaucoma, a stroke, damage to the optic nerve, or a severe brain injury. Most of our clients continue to lead safe, productive, and independent lives with the proper training, counseling, and adaptive aids provided by the Lions Low Vision Center.

Following the initial low vision evaluation, an appropriate magnifying device, high intensity lamp, and/or other adaptive devices are recommended to enhance a clients remaining field of vision. Most also learn new ways of dealing with living with low vision. These alternative methods assist our clients to safely perform routine daily tasks using their sense of touch and their sense of hearing. Clients receive these services at no out of pocket expense, thanks to the generosity of Lions Clubs in our district.

Low vision rehabilitation is not a cure for low vision. New medical treatments for wet macular degeneration and other conditions are being developed. Treatments for macular



degeneration depend on the stage of the disease, and whether it is wet or dry. There is no FDA approved treatment for the dry macular degeneration, but evidence indicates nutritional intervention may slow the progression of this disease. There are, however, several options for treating the wet macular degeneration, including, Avastin, Lucentis, Visudyne, and Macugen.

Routine visits to an ophthalmologist are essential for good eye health.

Did you know ? :

- Approximately 4.6 million Americans over the age of 40 are blind.
- Approximately 44 million Americans over the age of 40 have a Refractive Error.
- Approximately 2 million Americans over the age of 50 have Macular Degeneration.
- Approximately 22 million Americans over the age of 40 have Cataracts.
- Approximately 4.5 million Americans over the age of 40 have Diabetic Retinopathy.
- Approximately 2.3 million Americans over the age of 40 have Glaucoma.

Lions Low Vision Centers, Inc.

Lions Low Vision Center Funding:

Funding for the Lions Low Vision Centers, Inc. is provided by Lions Clubs of District 23B. Special fundraising events have been established by Lions Clubs in Berlin, East Windsor, Enfield, Plainville, Bristol, West Hartford, and Harwinton.

As a 501(c)3 organization, all donations are tax deductible. We are especially pleased to receive donations from individuals whose company has a matching gift program.

Please consider making a small donation to assist us in serving the visually impaired so that they can lead fuller and more productive lives.

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**33 Highland Avenue
New Britain, CT 06052
1-800-676-5715**

**Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation
103 Old Iron Ore Road
Bloomfield, CT 06002
1-800-676-5715**

**Sullivan Senior Center
Albert Street
Torrington, CT 06790
1-800-676-5715**

**Rehab Dynamics
975 Farmington Ave.
Bristol, CT 06010
1-860-589-3587**

Client Spotlight

Recently, an 88-year-old client walked into the Lions Low Vision Center and asked for help reading...reading textbooks. He had heard about the Lions Low Vision Center from his association with a senior citizen support group. His goal was to return to college to earn his master's degree.

Matthew retired from a local manufacturing company where he was employed as a quality control engineer. Four years ago, his wife of 53 years passed away. Three years ago, he suffered a stroke, leaving him with noticeable right side paralysis. Despite these setbacks, he felt his education was not complete. He had a thirst for knowledge. Matthew wanted to return to college to complete his degree.

Matthew began experiencing trouble reading the newspaper. He noticed that colors were not as vivid and that corners of buildings were no longer straight. Wisely, he made an appointment with his ophthalmologist two years ago. He diagnosed that

Matthew had wet macular degeneration and referred him to a retina specialist who began treating Matthew with the latest advances in treatment. A series of injections not only stabilized his condition, but also enhanced his vision.

Following eight months of treatment, Matthew's visual acuity actually improved. He talked with his doctor about his desire to return to college. The doctor referred Matthew to the Lions Low Vision Center for vision rehabilitation.

The Lions Low Vision Center provided training, and a specific hand held magnifier. We provided better lighting and corrected issues with contrast and glare. We made his professors aware of his situation. Matthew was given preferential seating. His professors allowed him to tape record their lectures. He was provided large print handouts in class. He was also provided with large print tests. A keyboard with large keys and contrasting colors and a special

computer software program, made using a computer a reality.

Matthew became an added resource in class. He had lived through the Great Depression and provided insight on hardships people faced on a daily basis. His vivid accounts of his experiences as a naval corpsman on Guadalcanal, taught classmates the horrors of war. He dazzled his classmates when he discussed the use of a slide rule to solve mathematical problems. His real life experiences added new dimensions to class lectures.

Matthew earned his Master's degree in history. At last report, he had returned to college to take additional classes. He is also receiving follow up treatment from his ophthalmologist. He still drops in to the Lions Low Vision Center to say hello.

If you know of someone with low vision, call:

**1-800-676-5715.
WE CAN HELP!**