

LIONS LOW VISION CENTERS, INC.

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Macular Degeneration

Do you know someone affected by macular degeneration? Chances are, you have a relative or neighbor with this disease. There are several types of macular degeneration affecting children, teenagers, and adults. Regardless of age, macular degeneration is the slow, progressive degeneration of the tissue in the macula. The macula is a small area of the retina responsible for perceiving central vision, color, and fine detail. When the macula does not function properly, your central vision may be blurred, distorted, or blind spots may develop.

Age related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of blindness amongst Americans 65 years of age and older. Age is the most important non-modifiable risk factor. Because women have a longer life expectancy, they are more likely to develop AMD-related low vision. People of Caucasian decent are more likely than African-Americans to develop low vision related AMD. Statically speaking, 5% of all reported AMD cases are people

of African-American decent and only 15% of all reported AMD cases are people of Hispanic decent .

It is estimated that AMD affects more than one third of adults over the age of 50. There are two common types of AMD in adults: "dry" and "wet."

Ninety percent of people with AMD have the dry type. It progresses through three stages. Dry AMD is associated with the thinning of the retina and the accumulation of deposits beneath the retina. These deposits, called Drusen, are believed to be waste products that accumulate because of the lack of antioxidants needed to clear the waste products from the eye. These deposits slowly break down the cells in the macula region, leading to blurred vision. In time, it may progress to the wet AMD.

Ten percent of people with AMD have the wet type. New blood vessels abnormally grow beneath the retina. These blood vessels lift and create wrinkles in



the retina, causing distortion. They also are likely to leak blood and fluids, leading to permanent damage to the light-sensitive retinal cells. This type causes rapid and severe damage occasionally bringing about blindness in just a few weeks.

Juvenile, or early onset macular degeneration is fairly rare, affecting an estimated 40,000 persons in the United States. Most of these cases are hereditary.

Did you know ? :

- Connecticut's 2nd annual Junior Visually Impaired Persons (VIP) Fishing Tournament will be held on April 18 and the 2nd annual Adult Visually Impaired Persons (VIP) Fishing Tournament will be held on May 16.
- Both events will be held at Sage Park, in Berlin, CT and are sponsored by the Berlin Lions Club. Junior VIP tournament open to children 3—16 years of age. Adult VIP Tournament for 17 years and older. Top three adult winners are invited to attend the National VIP Tournament in North Carolina October 10-14, 2010. Pre-registration for the CT tournaments is required. Contact rachriste1@cs.com

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 Spotlights

Maria is a 40 year old Hispanic lady, who came to the office in need of magnification devices. She has glaucoma, amblyopia, and has had a corneal transplant that is now clouding over. She wants to work, to be independent and to contribute to her community. She is despondent and fearful about filing for disability because she thinks that is something to feel shameful about.

Unfortunately, her doctor has not yet registered her for State services for the Blind. She was advised to request that he do so as quickly as possible. In addition to what the Lions Low Vision Center is able to provide the Vocational Rehabilitation Dept at the Board of Education and Services for the Blind will be able to train her for employment. Their staff is very adept at this type of assistance.

We were able to give her a lighted hand magnifier to assist her in seeing the smaller print, a large print keyboard to make the use of her computer easier and aids for writing, cooking, banking

and glare control. When she left said she had been so depressed and now she feels there is hope.

Louise is from East Hartford. Louise is no longer able to drive. She has been coming to the Lions Low Vision Center for several years with Macular Degeneration and with the assist of specialized magnifiers, special lighting and aids for activities of daily living, she has become quite self-sufficient and independent. But, she still is no longer able to drive. It is her biggest loss since losing her eyesight and unfortunately nothing we can do will allow her that pleasure anymore.

Today she called the Lions Low Vision Center and offered to donate her automobile to us as a charitable contribution. Without realizing it, this lovely lady may have given our non-profit organization the inspiration for a new fund-raiser. We learn as much from our clients as we teach them. It's a wonderful day.

Billy has been a client of ours in Torrington since 2007. He is 30 years old and suffers from severe glaucoma and retinal detachment. Billy utilizes the aids and devices we have given him to allow him to work and maintain his employment. Over the years the degree of difficulty is maintaining that independence has gotten more difficult, but he never gives up.

Using a large print keyboard and his hand held and stand magnifiers he continues to move forward through his daily life. He lives in his own apartment and takes care of himself. It is the efforts of the Lions that allow him to do so. To come to our Torrington center requires him to travel on the bus. He leaves his house at least an hour before his appointment and often has to wait an hour or more for the bus so that he can return home after he is seen. He tells us it is worth whatever effort it takes because he knows that he can do more with greater ease with the tools that he is given at the Lions Low Vision Center.