

Six Benefits of Using a White Cane

Featuring contributions by Sharon Payne and Julie Bruno

The long white cane is used by people who are blind or visually impaired as a tool for safe, independent, and reliable navigation. A white cane also allows a sighted person to recognize that the user is visually impaired.

While there are many benefits of using a white cane, Sharon Payne and Julie Bruno, our guest contributors, share their six favorite benefits of utilizing a white cane:

1. Buses, taxi cabs, and rideshare vehicles (such as Uber and Lyft) can easily find you waiting on the sidewalk.
2. A white cane can help alert drivers that you are visually impaired, and may need extra time in crossing the street. DC, Maryland, and Virginia all have laws that require drivers to take necessary precautions and yield when an individual using a white cane is present.

(Continued on page 2)

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News & Updates

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3. If you bump into a stranger, the other individual can easily recognize that you are visually impaired.
4. A white cane can help you detect and avoid obstacles such as curbs, stairs, puddles, fire hydrants, and more.
5. When shopping, a white cane helps make others more aware of why the person might be asking for assistance.
6. A white cane can increase your confidence, safety, and independence when traveling.

Like all tools, white canes work better with training to prevent accidents. Competence creates confidence. Strong navigation skills with a white cane come with practice. You won't be "ready" to use a cane before starting to train.

To get started, ask your doctor for a referral for Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Training.

To learn more, speak to your doctor, or call the POB Low Vision Resource and Information Hotline at (301) 951-4444.

Sharon Payne, COMS, CLVT, is an Orientation and Mobility Instructor. **Julie Bruno** is a community advocate and self-proclaimed "RP (Retinitis Pigmentosa) Warrior."

Resource of the Month

Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Training

Orientation and Mobility (O&M) instructors assist individuals with low vision travel independently and safely. While some may think of this as just learning to use a white cane or a guide dog, it can also include public transit travel, route planning, safety techniques, and more!

O&M instructors can help navigate the ever-changing transit landscape in DC, Maryland, and Virginia.

Training services may include:

- White cane training
- Guide dog training
- Safe travel training
- Route planning and orientation skills
- Origin and destination navigation
- How to safely cross streets and problem solve

Ask your doctor for a referral for Orientation and Mobility Training. Services may be covered by your medical insurance plan. Verify eligibility before the start of service by calling your insurance carrier's Member Services phone number.

To learn more, speak to your doctor, or call the POB Low Vision Resource and Information Hotline at (301) 951-4444.

Calendar of Events

FEBRUARY 2022

To register for an event, call (301) 951-4444
at least 24 hours prior to the event.

**TUE
8**

Low Vision Awareness Month

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. • Low Vision Support Group
Join Narmien Haddad, M.D., Washington National Eye Center Ophthalmology Resident, and Tara Aziz, Prevention of Blindness Society, to learn about services and resources that can help maintain independence and optimize remaining sight.
Hosted by Washington National Eye Center.

**TUE
8**

Virtual Happy Hour

6 p.m. – 7 p.m. • Stargardt's Network
All are welcome, regardless of eye condition!

**TUE
15**

Accessible Pharmacy and ScripTalk

1 p.m. - 2 p.m. • Tech Talk Tuesdays
Join us for a discussion with Andy Burstein of Accessible Pharmacy, a free home delivery pharmacy service for people with low vision.
Bring your questions!

To register for an event, call (301) 951-4444 at least 24 hours prior to the event.

**WED
16**

Low Vision Town Hall Meeting

11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. • Special Event

Join our moderator, Sean Curry, MPH, POB's Associate Director of Programs, to hear about important low vision topics and services, and ask questions. Call (301) 951-4444 to receive Zoom joining information – via computer or by phone!

**FRI
18**

Learn About Senior Services of Alexandria

1 p.m. - 2 p.m. • Low Vision Support Group

Join MaryAnne Beatty from Senior Services of Alexandria (SSA) to learn about SSA's programs! SSA fosters independence and self-sufficiency, enabling seniors within Alexandria to age with dignity. Hosted by Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library.

**THU
24**

Low Vision: What Can Be Done?

12 p.m. - 1 p.m. • Vision Resource Group

Join us as we discuss what low vision is and what services are available to help you optimize your sight! Bring your ideas and solutions, and let's connect! Hosted by Friendship Heights Village Center.

Living with Low Vision

Making Medications Accessible

By Tara Aziz

Getting to the pharmacy to pick up medications can be a challenge. Taking the correct medications at the proper dosage may also be challenging with low vision. However, some resources may make life much easier!

Accessible Pharmacy (215-799-9900) is a free home delivery pharmacy service for people with visual challenges. They provide free delivery, accessible packaging, and easy identification of medications through ScripTalk or Braille.

En-Vision America's ScripTalk device or app is another great option. The device will read a special chip attached to the bottom of the medication bottle, which provides an audible reading of the medication name, dosage, warnings, doctor's name, and instructions. To participate, call your pharmacy.

Some people want to hear from a person who can assist them in real time. The free Be My Eyes app connects you with a sighted volunteer who can read the label on your behalf. Another smartphone app, Aira, connects you with a professionally trained specialist.

To learn more, call the POB Low Vision Resource and Information Hotline at (301) 951-4444.

Dr. Nguyen's Nook

"Show and Tell" with Alexa

By Hang Nguyen, O.D.

Smart speakers have made great strides within our vision-impaired community allowing for the ability to make phone calls, listen to audiobooks, tell the time, and much more!

Amazon's new Show and Tell feature helps people use the Echo Show to identify common packaged food goods that are hard to distinguish by touch, such as canned or boxed foods. You can say, "**Alexa, what am I holding?**" or "**Alexa, what's in my hand?**" to get started.

Alexa will provide verbal and audio cues to help you place the item in front of the device's camera. To hear the tutorial and learn more, say, "**Alexa, help with Show and Tell.**"

With this new feature, a can of corn that feels similar to a can of diced tomatoes can be identified without having to strain the eyes, use a magnifier, or find another person to assist.

For more information about the Amazon Echo Show, visit amazon.com, or your preferred electronics retail store.

(POB does not endorse any specific product or service.)

Hang Nguyen, O.D., is a low vision specialist at Low Vision Services. To schedule an appointment, call **(703) 652-7803**.

We Want to Hear from You!

Do you have an idea for an article in *Your Eyes Today* or an idea for a topic for a *Low Vision Resource and Support Group* event?

Do you have a question for POB's *Low Vision Learning Center*, or feedback about this newsletter?

Let us know! We are eager to hear from you!

Call the Low Vision Learning Center at (301) 951-4444, email communications@youreyes.org, or send a letter to Prevention of Blindness Society, 415 2nd Street NE, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20002.

To also start receiving the digital edition of this newsletter, please send an email to communications@youreyes.org.

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Handicapped

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