



Your Eyes



DECEMBER '23 & JANUARY '24

TODAY

January is Glaucoma Awareness Month

Glaucoma is a leading cause of vision loss. Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that cause damage to the optic nerve, the nerve that connects your eyes to your brain. Glaucoma can lead to peripheral (or side) vision loss, normally in a slow, progressive way that makes it difficult to catch.

Glaucoma is caused by excess pressure buildup in your eye. Your eye has fluid (called aqueous) in it that helps keep things healthy. With any body system that has fluid, there is a drainage channel. In your eye, this is your trabecular meshwork, a part of the eye's drainage angle. With glaucoma, this drainage channel does not work properly, causing fluid buildup (think of the leaves clogging your home's gutters).

When buildup occurs, eye pressure increases, causing optic nerve damage. The pressure buildup is usually painless, and damage may not be noticeable at first. Untreated, it eventually causes permanent sight loss and legal blindness.

(Continued on next page)

**Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington®
415 2nd Street NE, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20002**

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(Continued from previous page)

You are at an increased risk of glaucoma if:

- **You have a family history of glaucoma**
- **You are African American over age 40, everyone over age 60 (especially if you of Hispanic or Latino origin)**
- **You have certain health conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure**

Early detection and treatment can prevent or slow vision loss. Treatments include prescription eye drops, laser treatments, and some surgeries. Treatments often work well, especially when we follow our medication protocols! The earlier it is caught, the more effective treatment can prevent significant vision loss or blindness.

The best thing you can do today to ensure you catch glaucoma early is to get a comprehensive, dilated eye exam. This exam can detect glaucoma in its early stages so you can begin treatment and keep your best sight.

Glaucoma can be managed, and a lot of vision loss can be avoided! By educating yourself, friends, and family and getting regular comprehensive eye exams, you can prevent or greatly slow sight loss from glaucoma!

To learn more, speak to your eye doctor or visit www.glaucomadc.org.

Calendar of Events

DECEMBER 2023 & JANUARY 2024

**DEC
12**

Holiday Get-Together

6 p.m. – 7 p.m. • Stargardt's Network

Let's celebrate together for the holidays! We invite the group to join us at our headquarters for pizza and merry discussion. To RSVP, call (301) 951-4444.

Prevention of Blindness Society Headquarters

415 2nd Street NE, Washington, DC

**DEC
14**

Leaving a Legacy: Thoughtful Ways to Give Back (Virtual Event)

11 a.m. – 12 p.m. • Special Event

Perry Hammock has spent decades helping individuals create and sustain caring legacies! In his webinar in March, Perry spoke about living a life of legacy and how to fine-tune the way friends, family, and colleagues remember us. If you have decided you wish to leave something to your favorite charities upon your demise, there are ways this can be done that can limit the tax liability on your estate, leaving more to heirs. Join us for this interesting event! To RSVP, call (301) 951-4444.

(Additional events on pages 4 and 5)

DECEMBER 2023 & JANUARY 2024

**DEC
15**

Learn About the Talking Books Program

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

The Library of Congress has a special free program for people unable to read normal print. Learn how to access free books on tape and much more!

To RSVP, call (301) 951-4444.

Charles E. Beatley Jr. Central Library

5005 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA

**JAN
10**

Maryland Assistive Technology Library

2 p.m. – 3 p.m. • Leisure World Lions Group

Guest Speaker: Jerry Rice, Program Manager

With vision loss, we need adjustments and technology to help us adapt. This State-run program can help! Call Larry at (908) 770-9111 to RSVP.

Leisure World Clubhouse II Edmondson Room

3300 N Leisure World Blvd., Silver Spring, MD

**JAN
16**

Accessible Pharmacy (Virtual Event)

1 p.m. – 2 p.m. • Tech Talk Tuesdays

Join Andy Burstein of Accessible Pharmacy, a free home delivery pharmacy service for people with vision impairment. They offer accessible packaging, easy identification of medications through ScripTalk or Braille, and more. To RSVP, call (301) 951-4444.

JANUARY 2024 (continued)

**JAN
17**

Hope, Planning, Joy – Looking to 2024 Low Vision Town Hall (Virtual Event)

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

Guest Speaker: Nina Glasner, LCSW-C

Join us as Dr. Alibhai and Nina Glasner share ideas to foster optimism for the new year and providing coping strategies for the holiday season.

Call **(301) 951-4444** to register.

**JAN
27**

Glaucoma Research Update

10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. • Presentation

11 a.m. – 2 p.m. • Free Glaucoma Screening

**Special Guest: Arthur Schwartz, M.D., Washington
Eye Physicians and Surgeons**

Learn about the latest research and updates on glaucoma, a leading cause of vision loss and blindness. After the presentation, there will be free glaucoma screenings. All are welcome!

To RSVP, call **(301) 951-4444**.

Friendship Heights Village Center

4433 South Park Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD



Listen and watch replays of recent webinars and other POB events at: www.youreyes.org/replays

Stories of Hope

Meet Frank Linton

By Laurence Bass

Frank Linton has a sweet spot for honeybees. It dates back to his childhood in Vermont, where he closely watched his grandfather, an apiarist—or ‘beekeeper’. He learned firsthand how to care for bees while harvesting honey in New England's forests of untapped beech, birch, and maple trees coursing with the sap needed to make syrup. Decades later, he took a college course on beekeeping while living in Virginia, which refreshed his love for the pastime. With decades of beekeeping know-how, Frank’s expression instantly lights up whenever he starts talking about the benefits outside of collecting honey his pastime affords him.

“Observing bees introduces you to how they gather their food from flowers—so you start seeing what flowers are in bloom,” Frank says with a growing smile before continuing. “That makes you aware of the seasons. You start observing landscapes and the climate—and pretty soon, you’re in tune with the outside world more than you would be otherwise.”

This now-retired artificial intelligence engineer and EAS-Certified Master Beekeeper is the author of two books (‘The Observation Hive Handbook’, ‘Hive Tour: The Insider’s Guide To Exploring Bees’).

Frank, who is legally blind, has worn eyeglasses since the first grade. In recent years, glaucoma forced him to start adjusting to his new level of sight and no longer being able to fully take part in the activities enjoyed—including beekeeping.

“My low vision has impacted me significantly,” Frank begins. “The two things you need when beekeeping are a strong back and good eyesight. With my eyesight, it’s hard to see the bee eggs in the honeycomb because they’re much smaller than a grain of rice and way down inside the honeycomb. I can hardly see the bees, and you don’t want to stick your hand in the honeycomb with poor vision.”

However, Frank’s optimism serves as a guide to staying active and social during these first steps of his vision journey. Frank takes immense pride in mentoring new local beekeepers. “People new to apiculture want to work with a more experienced beekeeper,” Frank states. “I found out that my friends, who are just a couple houses down the street—and one a mile away—wanted to become beekeepers and wanted to have them in their backyards. I started teaching these couples how to store their honeycombs.”

Frank also runs three honey-bee-related websites and hosts the International Colony Monitoring Technology conference.

“Low vision may slow me down, but it doesn’t stop me,” Frank concludes. Frank’s dedication to adapting to his vision impairment by sharing the knowledge learned from his grandfather keeps him a part of the honey-garnering process, which has become one of his life’s sweetest rewards.

News & Updates

The Holiday Season: A Time to Talk

The holiday season is a time for warmth, joy, and family gatherings. The season presents an opportunity to discuss your vision loss properly with family and friends. While discussing it with family members during this festive time might seem daunting, open communication is key to ensuring everyone enjoys the season.

Vision loss can be difficult and may make you feel isolated at first from family. It is important to remember that they love you and care about you. However, they may need clarification over how to help if you want help or what they are supposed to or not supposed to say. Often, families want to do too much, which could be frustrating for everyone!

Here are some tips to help you approach the topic:

Choose the Right Setting: Find a quiet and comfortable space where you can talk without distractions. During the holidays, cozy corners by the fireplace or after a meal can create a relaxed atmosphere for meaningful conversations.

Express Your Feelings: Share your emotions about vision impairment with your family. Discuss how it has impacted your life and the challenges you're facing. Be honest and open, allowing your family to understand your perspective.

Educate Them: Many family members may not fully comprehend the extent of vision impairment. Take the time to educate them about your condition, its progression, and any adaptive measures you've taken.

Share Your Needs: Be clear about your specific needs and how your family can support you. This may include assistance with tasks, providing clear descriptions, or ensuring a safe environment. Encourage them to ask questions and actively participate in finding solutions.

Emphasize Inclusivity: Remind your family that despite vision impairment, you are an active and vital part of holiday celebrations. Encourage them to involve you in holiday traditions, adapting activities to accommodate your needs.

Frame It as a Shared Journey: Position the discussion as a shared journey that the entire family can embark on together. Stress that addressing it collectively can strengthen family bonds and create a deeper sense of unity.

Offer Resources: Provide your family with resources or materials that can help them better understand vision impairment and its impact. Call (301) 951-4444 to request brochures or other materials that may assist you.

Approaching the conversation with empathy, honesty, and a collaborative spirit can strengthen your relationship with your family and ensure that everyone enjoys a holiday season filled with love and understanding.

Navigating Challenges Together

By Sean Curry, MPH

As many of our readers know, gaining a vision impairment later in life can be a significant hurdle – the physical, social, emotional, and psychological effects can all be challenging to address. And, when it's new, it is even more of a challenge!

Many of our neighbors are learning to live with new vision loss, and some may feel alone in their efforts. Others may feel overwhelmed on where to start. And others may be in denial about their vision loss. They may wonder if they are a burden to their family, how they can get to their next doctor's appointment, or how to find help.

During this holiday season, make time to check in on your friends and family. Some may be looking for help or even a familiar voice. You never know – vision loss is an invisible disability in that people cannot necessarily tell you have a vision impairment. You may change someone's life!

For example, neighbors and family members have contacted me since working at POB. They are sharing their vision challenges. They likely would not share these vision challenges had I not shared what I do. You can do the same with your knowledge as well!

Vision loss can be difficult; however, you don't have to walk the journey alone! Call (301) 951-4444 to speak with a Resource Navigator today!

Living with Low Vision

Keeping the Holiday Spirit

By Tara Aziz

The holidays can bring hope and inner joy with them. Whether this be time, gifts, treats, or laughs, this is a time to remember what's important!

With vision loss, we may not be inclined to drive to someone's home, shop at the mall on Black Friday, or make a gingerbread house. But there is still so much we can do!

- Enjoy a holiday-themed movie with audio description
- Participate in holiday baking activities (if your cookies aren't shaped perfectly, just call it an abstract reindeer!)
- Play audible games
- Share holiday cheer
- Much, much more!

I encourage you to forget the "I could" and concentrate on the "I CAN." I can use my muscles to smile. I can be a shining light! There are so many things I can do that I am thankful for.

Do not hesitate to call friends or family members who live alone—just seeing how they are doing means so much. You can also support an organization that you feel helps others!

Call the POB Low Vision Resource and Information Hotline at **(301) 951-4444** to speak with a Resource Navigator.

Join POB READS!

Winter is an excellent time for leisure reading! Join **POB READS** – a casual book club for all with vision challenges! We encourage reading and socializing!

POB READS meets virtually on the first Friday of every other month at 11 a.m. The next virtual meeting is on **Friday, January 5, at 11 a.m.** The next book is **Auntie Poldi and the Sicilian Lions** by Mario Giordano.

All books are available for free through the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled, also known as the Talking Books Program.

To sign up, visit pobreads.org or call (301) 951-4444.

To also start receiving an electronic copy of this newsletter, please email communications@youreyes.org.

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