Seeing Hope℠

FEBRUARY 2026

TODAY

Low Vision Accessibility in AI

Living with vision loss can change how people move through the world. Tasks such as reading signs, navigating stairs, or finding entrances often take more time and attention. Researchers are exploring new tools that may help make everyday moments safer.

At Arizona State University, the LENS Lab project focuses on practical ways technology can support people who have low vision. The project studies how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can work with smart glasses to provide useful information about a person's surroundings.

Through this project, researchers are testing how Meta Glasses can be improved to better assist daily life. A person wearing the device can ask simple spoken questions, such as what an object is, how many stairs remain, or what a sign says. The system responds with clear, spoken guidance to help orient the user.

(Continued on next page)

Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington®
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Listening to people with vision loss has been central to the project from the beginning. Early conversations made it clear that safety, accuracy, and reliability matter most. These priorities shaped how the technology's development, with a strong focus on real-world use rather than complex or unnecessary features.

Rather than creating something entirely new, the LENS Lab project builds on technology that already exists and explores how it can be made more helpful. This includes looking ahead to how future smart glasses, including those developed by Meta, could better support navigation, reading, and awareness of surroundings.

While this work is still evolving, it reflects a thoughtful approach to assistive technology. For older adults living with vision loss, it offers a glimpse of tools designed with care, practicality, and independence in mind.

At POB's **Seeing Hope Low Vision Resource Centers**, you can meet with a Resource Navigator and explore the Ray-Ban Meta Glasses mentioned here, and other devices.

- 105 South Alfred Street, Alexandria, VA 22314
- 415 2nd Street NE, Washington, DC 20002
- 4948 St. Elmo Avenue, Suite 209, Bethesda, MD 20814

Call **(301) 951-4444** to schedule a free appointment.

Low Vision Awareness Month

Low vision affects millions of Americans and tens of thousands of people in our region. It can make everyday activities like reading, cooking, or recognizing faces difficult and cannot be corrected with glasses, contact lenses, medication, or surgery.

Low vision is most often caused by age-related eye diseases such as age-related macular degeneration (AMD), glaucoma, and diabetic eye disease, as well as congenital conditions, eye injuries, or inherited disorders. Vision loss can feel overwhelming, but it does not mean the end of independence or quality of life.

Finding the right support for low vision can be challenging. POB's **Seeing Hope Resource and Information Hotline** can help. Call **(301) 951-4444** to speak with a Resource Navigator who will answer your questions and connect you with local programs.

Vision rehabilitation is another important resource for people experiencing vision loss. It can help people make the most of their remaining sight through specialized exams and personalized strategies.

Referrals are recommended for vision rehab services, though anyone may inquire. To learn more about POB's **Seeing Hope Vision Rehabilitation Clinic**, call **(202) 234-1010, option 2**, or visit **youreyes.org/rehab**.

Calendar of Events

FEBRUARY 2026

To register for an event, call **(301) 951-4444** or visit **www.youreyes.org/events**.

TUE 10

Healthy Aging (Virtual Event)

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. • Vision Support Group

Join **Kyle Thomson, M.D., Washington National Eye Center Ophthalmology Resident**, to discuss coping with low vision and macular degeneration. Hosted by **Washington National Eye Center**.

TUE 10

Automated Home Devices (Virtual Event)

6 p.m. – 7 p.m. • Stargardt's Network

Join us to explore automated devices and discuss how they make tasks easier.

WED 11

Veterans Administration (VA) Blind Rehabilitation Center (In-Person Event)

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

Join **Larry Cohen, Leisure World Lions Group facilitator,** to learn about his experience at the VA's Blind Training Center in Puerto Rico.

Leisure World Clubhouse II - Rossmoor Room
3300 N Leisure World Blvd., Silver Spring, MD

To register for an event, call **(301) 951-4444** or visit **www.youreyes.org/events.**

TUE 17

Video Magnifiers and CCTVs (Virtual Event)

1 p.m. – 2 p.m. • Seeing Hope Tech Talk

Join **Nitesh Rathod, Rehab Technology Specialist at the Virginia Department for the Blind and Visually Impaired**, to explore how and when video magnifiers can help us with reading.

WED 18

What is Vision Rehabilitation? (Virtual Event)

11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Seeing Hope Low Vision Town Hall

Join **Suleiman Alibhai, O.D., Clinical Director of POB's Vision Rehabilitation Program**, and **Peyam Mojallal, O.D., low vision optometrist**, to learn what vision rehabilitation is and how it helps people with vision impairments maximize their remaining sight through specialized exams, adaptive tools, and personalized strategies for safe, independent daily living.

(Additional events on next page)

FEBRUARY 2026 (continued)

THU 19

Free Accessibility Apps (In-Person Event)

11 a.m. – 12 p.m. • Vision Resource Group

Learn about free apps that assist with identifying objects and reading more independently, offering practical tools that can make everyday activities easier, safer, and more accessible.

To RSVP, call **(301) 656-2797.**

Friendship Heights Village Center

4433 South Park Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD

MARCH 2026

FRI 6

Seeing Hope Book Club (Virtual Event)

11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Join us for **Bless Your Heart** by Lindy Ryan, a sharp Southern mystery horror set in 1999 Texas, where a family of funeral directors discovers the dead are not staying buried, and four generations of Evans women must protect their town, stop ancient vampires, and keep long-buried secrets from coming back to life.. To register, call **(301) 951-4444** or visit **pobreads.org.**

Catch up anytime with our growing collection of over 70 videos, including Low Vision Town Halls, Tech Talks, and more. Watch or listen by visiting **www.youreyes.org/replays**

Automated Cars

By Tara Aziz

Control is a funny word when you've never held a steering wheel. For me, being driven has always meant the absence of control: routes chosen by others, timing borrowed, independence carefully rationed. Every trip depends on someone else's availability. Movement becomes a negotiation rather than a decision.

Driverless cars have been testing around DC, and when they first started showing up, I felt excitement, tangled with fear and hesitation. The promise is thrilling, but the uncertainty is real. New technology always comes with glitches, learning curves, and, inevitably, mistakes.

This isn't just about transportation. It's about dignity, autonomy, and access. What I feel most strongly is hope. Hope for independence: ordering a ride without assistance, identifying the vehicle, and knowing what to do once inside. Hope that accessibility is built into the design from the start. And hope that Virginia opens its streets, so those of us with vision impairments aren't left waiting at the curb of progress.

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

Resource of the Month: Apple (iOS) Magnifier App

Apple's Magnifier app has new updates that may make your life easier. New features include stronger text and object magnification, improved contrast and color filters, text that can be read aloud, and automatic descriptions of surroundings. Additional updates include tools that help identify doors and judge the distance to nearby people so that you can move more safely through everyday spaces.

To download for free: Open the App Store on your iPhone or iPad, search for **Magnifier by Apple**, and tap **Get.**

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

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