

The Sight Center of NW PA

Form 990

Page 2 Part III: Statement of Program Service Accomplishments

Mission: The mission of the Sight Center is *to prevent blindness and promote independence for those with vision loss and those who are blind.*

4a. Prevention of Blindness: Research confirms that 25% of children enter kindergarten with a visual condition that impedes learning. As part of our mission to prevent blindness, the Center provided 2799 pediatric vision screenings and 466 youth were educated in pre-schools, child-care centers and kindergarten registration events in our seven-county service area from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. This is up from previous year 26% as COVID restrictions were lessening. Roughly 6% of children screened failed the screening and required professional follow-up for conditions and parents of all children who failed screenings were contacted at 30-, 60-, and 90-days post-screening to ensure care was provided to the child. This percentage matches the national benchmarks of 6-8%.

In support of its mission to prevent blindness, in 2017 the Sight Center implemented the National Diabetes Prevention Program (NDPP) created and sponsored by the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Diabetes is the leading cause of severe and permanent vision loss in adults of all ages. By preventing or delaying the on-set of diabetes, we prevent or delay diabetes-related damage to the eyes. The Center received and maintained full national CDC recognition for this program for ten data submission cycles between 2017 and 2021. DOUBLE FULL recognition was awarded in 2022 making the Center's program one of only a handful in the nation with that designated. Program participants successfully graduate with weight loss at or in excess of the prescribed 5-7% and increase their exercise to a minimum of 150 minutes per week.

Vision Rehabilitation: The goal of vision rehabilitation is to improve quality of life in people living with vision loss. The Center provides low vision examinations and professional follow-up to adults and children with reduced vision to maintain independence. Research states that 1 out of 3 older adults are diagnosed with a progressive eye disease which affects their vision and makes it difficult to complete activities of daily living independently. Recruitment efforts for a low vision optometrist to replace the OD who left during COVID began in June 2020 and continue today. All patients referred for low vision are offered a ride to one of two low vision specialists in the surrounding area. Patients referred also receive phone calls to assess their situations every three to four months.

Blindness Services and Social Support:

In support of its mission to promote independence in FY2022, the Sight Center Provided 116.5 Hours of Life Skills and Education. We delivered 732.19 hours of Support Services and 3,486 hours of transportation services. A milestone number of 236 individuals received ongoing supportive services, up 68% from the previous year.

Blind and low vision youngsters and older adults participated in building and maintaining an outdoor "sensory garden" with the help and support of volunteers and Tess Frawley, owner of Eat Your Yard

edible landscaping. Children also participated, along with volunteers from the Sight Center, in ENVISION Blind Sports' week-long summer camp experience at Penn State Behrend.

24 low vision and blind adults participated in a bi-weekly support and education program, including but not limited to: technology assistance, transportation options, white cane instruction, cooking, crafts, resource sharing, socialization, and mutual support. The Sight Center instituted "companion calling" to ensure our older blind participants have regular contact and support.

Clients of the Sight Center are evaluated for changing needs and challenges as they occur, and service plans are reviewed and updated with clients individually on an annual basis. Referrals are made to appropriate community service programs and private service providers, as appropriate.

Social support programs continued uninterrupted during the COVID-19 shutdowns and uncertain times since March 2020. In fact, these programs saw increased demand due to family support reductions and other agencies who were forced to close. Sight Center drivers and social service providers continue to visit and assist our older blind and visually impaired clients and help them meet their independence, medical and social needs.