An 85 Year Legacy of Love & Leadership
To our loyal donors and stakeholders,

Twenty-four years ago, I had the good fortune to meet Tyco Swick who hired me – a thirty-six-year-old mom of three small children - to work at the Sight Center, known then as the Blind Center. For the next ten years, Tyco afforded me the opportunity to have the best of both worlds. I was able to raise my kids while working part-time from home, serving a mission that I loved.

Since becoming the executive director myself more than a decade ago, I have continued to offer flexibility to our staff so they could experience similar work/life balance and success. Although times have certainly changed in my tenure, creating a culture of compassion, flexibility with accountability, and best practices in all that we do has been and continues to be my focus. I am proud to continue a long legacy of love and leadership!

I hope you enjoy the following glimpse into the Sight Center’s mission work as we draw our 85th year to a close, and that you share the pride that our staff, Board of Directors, and I have in our mission to prevent blindness and promote independence among those who are losing their vision and those who are blind.

Thank YOU for being part of our lives and the lives of those we serve.

Sincerely,

Linda J. Moore,
CEO/Executive Director
Independence is achieved or maintained, and quality of life is improved for those with vision loss or blindness through the support of the Sight Center Specialized Services program and individualized case management. This year, 191 individuals received services including life skills, education, social work, and transportation.

More than 4,600 hours were spent on TSS services this fiscal year, with transportation accounting for 80% of those hours. For so many of our participants, vision is just the beginning of their losses; they have lost their transportation independence, as well.

The Sight Center’s transportation program enables riders to shop for life-sustaining groceries and prescriptions, get to their medical appointments to support their health, and to access other needed services. Individuals with declining vision report improved function and safety when they reside in their independent environment with support services provided.

- The Sight Center case management staff made thousands of contacts with our clients and community members for referrals for additional support services this fiscal year. Having a well-established network of partnerships to receive and make referrals across our seven-county geography has a major impact on the continuum of care for individuals in need.

- Assistive technology is so much more advanced than a magnifying glass or cell phone. The Sight Center supports client training on equipment and software to help impact their safety and independence and provide better access to the world.

- Pennsylvania has one of the oldest populations in the US. Consequently, rates of vision loss are amongst the highest in the nation.
Support groups bring together people who are going through or have gone through similar experiences. This common ground might be a specific shared trauma, a medical condition, addiction/recovery and many more. A support group among people with shared experiences may function as a bridge between physical and emotional needs.

The common experience among members of a support group often means they have similar feelings, worries, everyday problems, treatment decisions or treatment side effects. Participating in a group provides people with an opportunity to be with others who are likely to have a common purpose and to understand one another.

Support groups may offer educational opportunities, such as guest speakers on a wide array of topics that relate to the group’s needs, or other activities that help to enrich their participants’ lives and show them that they are not alone in their experience.

Some benefits of support groups include:

- Feeling less lonely, isolated, or judged
- Reducing distress, depression, anxiety, or fatigue
- Talking openly and honestly about your feelings
- Improving skills to cope with challenges
- Staying motivated to manage chronic conditions or stick to treatment plans
- Gaining a sense of empowerment, control, or hope
- Improving understanding of a disease and your own experience with it
- Getting practical feedback about treatment options
- Learning about health, economic or social resources

The Sight Center hosts a Wednesday Club that is designed to help visually impaired and blind individuals learn and/or adapt their life skills to promote independence. Club, like a support group, meets twice a month on the first and third Wednesday from 11:00 am – 2:00 pm. A big part of the draw of the Club to members is the social aspect of getting to know one another and sharing personal knowledge about mastering daily living tasks, assistive technology, and much more.

There are a variety of different programs that support education and quality of life (fun!). Featured speakers that educate and provide resources are a big component, along with demonstrations in cooking, sewing, crafts and other hobbies. During the summer, gardening, shopping, picnics, and other community visits are planned and white-cane walking excursions are encouraged. Lunch is always a part of the social festivities, either cooked by Club members on site, ordering take-out or visiting a local establishment while on an outing.

Everyone is invited to suggest educational and leisure topics along with destinations that would be of interest, and the Group Services Coordinator does her best to accommodate the needs and interests of its membership. Attend some or all the meetings according to your availability!

NEW MEMBERS ARE ENCOURAGED! For more information on the Wednesday Club, please contact Susan McNeish at the Sight Center of Northwest PA at 814-455-0995.
Many individuals and their families are adapting to a loss of vision, the onset of an eye disease, an instant tragedy that left someone with a vision impairment or continuing to persevere with being blind for many years. When it comes to resources and information, there are so many ways to find information these days, in fact, many of us experience information overload. But from the perspective of an individual who is blind or is experiencing visual impairment, some of those resources are diminished in value. It’s important to reach our community and clients in a way that suits their needs.

The Sight Center began a “Speaker Series” to engage our community in topics that pertain to eye health, vision rehabilitation, orientation and mobility, assistive technology, and many other ideas to encourage independence and a better quality of life. Our first of many events featured Christine Donmoyer, PhD., and author of the book “Invisible Disability – Living with Macular Degeneration.” Christy shared insight from her unique perception of being a scientist and a patient who was diagnosed at 27 with Stargardt disease, an early form of Macular Degeneration. Her presentation was raw and honest as she addressed many distinct challenges that she faces in daily life and offered tips on coping with each stage of vision loss and how her condition affected her emotional well-being.

Macular Degeneration affects over ten million people in the US. Patients lose central vision, the ability to read fine print and recognize faces. A diagnosis does not mean surrendering to the challenges, but an understanding can help to pave the way toward a better future.

FUTURE EVENTS IN OUR “SPEAKER SERIES” ARE PLANNED.

To learn more about these informative in-person events call the Sight Center or follow us on social media @Sightcenternwpa!
The staff and volunteers of the Sight Center of NW PA clock countless hours to support individuals and their families in our seven counties. We do this through community outreach, building strategic partnerships across our geographies, phone calls, referrals, and our core services in prevention of blindness and promoting independence for those who are blind or living with a visual impairment. Thousands of lives each year are touched by our services and our compassionate connection. It often means we are taking the initiative for our client’s well-being and meeting someone in need where they are. We rely on collective impact to change and improve their lives.

The Sight Center continues to expand the professionally run support services that help participants learn new techniques, technology, and adaptations for daily living, to follow their passions, and create new ones, and most importantly - have the confidence and resources to be as independent and fulfilled as they can be despite life’s challenges.

“Thank you so much for taking the time to come over and help me make calls to coordinate my medical information. My daughter works and does not have as much time...we are grateful for the Sight Center!”

– Donna
Coming into Sight: NATIONAL DIABETES PREVENTION PROGRAM (NDPP)

The Sight Center supports the prevention of blindness by offering the evidence-based National Diabetes Prevention Program to those considered to be at risk for type 2 diabetes. Diabetes is the leading cause of severe and permanent vision loss in working age individuals.

Participants learn tips, strategies, and skills to help meet personal weight loss goals and increase their level of physical activity. These lifestyle changes can significantly improve overall health and well-being and are key to preventing, delaying, and reversing the onset of type 2 diabetes. The NDPP’s year-long program provides ongoing coaching, peer support and accountability.

The Sight Center has maintained full recognition from the CDC, indicating that all requirements were met and that our program is an effective means to prevent type 2 diabetes.

A steady increase from the prior fiscal year and our greatest number of participants."

– Outcomes Report
Prediabetes is a serious health condition where blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not yet high enough to be type 2 diabetes.

The good news is making lifestyle changes can help prevent or delay type 2 diabetes and related health problems.

More than 1 in 3 adults have prediabetes.

8 of 10 don’t know they have it.

Know the Risks:

- Inactivity
- Overweight
- Over 45 Years
- Parent or Sibling w/Diabetes
- High Blood Pressure
- Had Gestational Diabetes

Reduce the Risks:

- Eat Healthy Foods
- Quit Smoking & Tobacco Use
- Maintain a Healthy Weight
- Move More Often
Open Your Eyes: YOU MIGHT HAVE PREDIABETES

In 1998, Pam Carbonetti experienced a loss that most of us could never even imagine. Literally in the blink of an eye, she became totally blind when her blood pressure spiked suddenly and severely. This event irreparably damaged the blood vessels in her eyes, leaving her with no usable vision.

“Before I lost my eyesight, I never participated in preventive health screenings of any kind,” Pam recalls. “Since then, I have realized the need to be aware of my health status and to do whatever I can to avoid other medical problems.”

In July of this year, Pam learned through routine bloodwork that she had a condition called prediabetes. Prediabetes is when your blood sugar is too high, but not yet high enough to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes. It is important to know that prediabetes is REVERSIBLE and type 2 diabetes is PREVENTABLE in most cases.

Because Pam already participated in Adult Socialization and Education Programming at the Sight Center, she was aware that they also administer the National Diabetes Prevention Program. “I decided I was not going to let myself slip into diabetes,” Pam recalls. “I enrolled in diabetes prevention and began classes in August.”

During the first six weeks of this year-long lifestyle change program, Pam lost fifteen pounds and started to make significant changes to her daily health habits. “The first simple change I made was increasing my water intake. Now I start each morning with a bottle of water, and keep drinking all day,” she explains. “Drinking enough water not only curbs your hunger, but it just makes you feel better in so many other ways.”

Pam also incorporated better nutritional balance into her daily meals and snacks. “I really pay attention to getting enough protein throughout the day and cutting out most sugary snacks,” she says. “I love getting recipes and meal ideas from the other program members; and the other evening our Lifestyle Coach took the time to talk me through the process for cooking perch in a healthier way!” The Sight Center works to meet the individual needs of each program participant. “I get the program lessons in Braille, so that I can refer back to them as often as I need,” Pam explains. “That is so helpful, because it lets me review meal plans and keep myself on track with my food goals.”

Pam not only continues to make progress in the National Diabetes Prevention Program, but she continues to participate in the Social & Educational Programming twice each month at the Sight Center. “We learn new things, do crafts, cook healthy meals, have guest speakers, and celebrate the holidays together,” Pam describes. “It’s a great group of people who have turned into a gang of friends.”

To determine your risk of developing type 2 diabetes, call Becca Swick at the Sight Center, 814-455-0995.
OVERALL

AGENCY EXPENSES: $1,149,073

SOURCES OF REVENUE

TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE: $994,565
## SUMMARY OF INDIVIDUAL GIVING

**FY 2022-2023**

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**SUMMARY**

Building a legacy of possibilities out of generosity.

— Anonymous.
Pediatric vision screenings in pre-school, child-care centers, home school groups and kindergarten registrations can detect current and potential vision loss in children ages one to six. Early intervention allows time for eye care professionals to diagnose and treat conditions that can lead to blindness if not treated before age eight.

For children trying to grow and thrive in a learning environment, the senses must be fully engaged to keep up and succeed. With one sense not fully engaged, especially a sense as vital as vision, any child will struggle to learn. A child who struggles academically faces emotional, social, and psychological challenges.

The Sight Center is committed to:
• Being accessible to daycares, pre-schools, and kindergarten classes to provide vision screenings
• All children who fail a screening will be referred for professional eye care
• Follow ups will occur with 100% of the families of children who were referred to eyecare professionals at 30, 60 and 90 days

1 in 4 school-age children have undetected vision problem.

400 HRS educating parents in eye health.

260 YOUTH referrals to eyecare professionals.
Knowledge Made Visible: THE CHILDREN’S PROGRAM

The children’s program teaches participants to better function in the sighted world through professionally administered activities. They work through challenges, learn daily living skills, and explore diverse opportunities to thrive and gain independence.

An entrepreneurial series was focused on career goals and exploring opportunities. Sight Center field trips were planned for indoor and outdoor winter activities and most well attended was the Maritime Museum for a historical presentation and tour of the museum as well as the U.S. Brig Niagara.

Another highlight of the year is the annual Envision Sports Camp, a week-long experience that 80+ youth attend from across the region. The Sight Center provides financial assistance to support this worthwhile event that our community is so fortunate to have so close. Sight Center staff also provides volunteer support throughout the week to help with cooking/serving meals and the best part – to encourage and cheer on the participants!

490 HRS
CHILD SCREENING HOURS

11.6%
FAIL THE SCREENING

ONLY 33%
RECEIVE CARE & TREATMENT NEEDED
Partnerships help us to build strength in the communities we serve, to elevate our level of service and collaborate in the continuum of care for those with vision impairments."

– Doug Starr, Board Chairman
Translating Vision into Reality with LEADERSHIP & TEAMWORK

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2022-2023

Doug Starr, Chair
Mike Ruzzi, Vice Chair
Anne Piotrowicz, Treasurer
Joseph DeMartino, Secretary
Tom Pysz, Immediate Past Chair
Anthony Angelone, Esq.
Jacque Caringola, OD
Maria Gartrell
Ned Reade
Sarah Uglow

Emeritus Directors:
Thorp Andrews
Nicholas Sala, DO
Barry Stamm, MD
Roger Taft, Esq.
William Vorsheck

OUR CURRENT STAFF

Linda Moore, Executive Director
Carole Brosius, Vision Screener/Driver
Lana Kunik, Director of Diabetes Prevention
Janine LaCour, Operations Coordinator
Pam Masi, Director of Operations
Susan McNeish, Group Services Coordinator
Kathleen Mosier, Executive Assistant
Rebecca Swick, LC, MPA, LPN, BSW, Outreach Coordinator
Tyco Swick, Lions Liaison

Driver/Service Aids:
Allen Ericson
David Way
Ruthann Johnston
George Savko

OUR PARTNERS

Active Aging Center, Crawford County’s Area Agency of Aging
Adagio Health
Aetna Medicare Advantage
All of Us Research Program
Allegheny Health Network
AmeriHealth Caritas Health Plan
Blue Zone Project
Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
Corry Library
Corry Memorial Hospital
Dan Laughlin, PA State Senator
Erie Community Foundation
Erie County Department of Health
Erie Insurance
Erie Retina Research Group
GECAC
Highmark & Highmark Foundation
Highmark Whole Care
Intermediate Unit 5- Erie County (IU-5)
Joe Schember, City of Erie Mayor
Meadville Area Free Clinic
Medicare Diabetes Prevention Program/Medicaid Diabetes Prevention Program
Mercyhurst University
Multiple Primary Care Physicians and Endocrinologists
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
Nonprofit Partnership
PA Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS)
PA Health Promotion Council
Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations
Quality Insights
Ryan Bizzarro, PA House of Representatives
Second Harvest Food Bank
Venango Association for the Blind
Wal-Mart/Wal-Mart Pharmacy
Warren Area Agency of Aging
Warren General Hospital
MISSION
TO PREVENT BLINDNESS AND PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE FOR THOSE WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED.

The Sight Center of NW PA is eagerly anticipating a long-awaited partnership to bring low vision services back under our roof again.

LOOK FOR OUR EXCITING NEWS IN THE MONTHS AHEAD!