



SPECTRIOS INSTITUTE FOR LOW VISION

THE BRIGHTSIDE

VOLUME 2 | JULY 2024



SPECTRIOS ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC

SEPTEMBER 23, 2024 | PRAIRIE LANDING GOLF CLUB



Play golf, get inspired, and make a difference! Join our Annual Golf Classic, where golf and goodwill unite. Experience a day filled with fun, while supporting Spectrios Institute for Low Vision's mission to bring hope and scientific support to those with vision loss. Limited space available, register now! Scan the QR Code or visit www.spectrios.org/golf to sign up!

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Newly Donated and On the Road: The Little White Van's First Adventure

This is a thank you story to Spectrios patient **John Spellman** and all the caring people at Bill Kay Chevrolet in Lisle. Our "Little White Van" made its maiden voyage to Bloomington, Illinois, traveling south to its first "Seeing is Believing" clinic in the heart of the state.

The van was packed with glass frames, low vision tools to help children see better, and special packages from **Grandma Martyl Reinsdorf** filled with tiny stuffed animals and coloring books for all our low vision friends. It rumbled across tracks, through a sky full of cicadas, and up a hill to the clinic where Mrs. Tabaka, the kindest vision coordinator, was patiently waiting.

Parents had driven from near and far so their children could access specialized low vision exams and devices Spectrios provides. They couldn't be more appreciative that this program is available to them at no cost. One mother brought popcorn treats and a sweet thank you note that read, "The world could certainly use more people like you. We appreciate the support and services you provide for the community."

A few of the students we saw have been coming to our clinics for over five years and are now graduating from high school. Dr. Williams, who has been with the program for over 30 years, has watched these children grow up. Each student has a story beyond their vision loss. They are dancers, animal lovers, artists, gamers, best friends—who happen to have low vision. Their vision loss does not define them. They don't hold back. They think they can, and they do.

Thank you **Shirley and Bill Koloseike Foundation** for donating this van to Spectrios. Without reliable transportation, we wouldn't be able to deliver the life-changing services that empower these children to excel alongside their peers in the classroom and gain confidence beyond the school environment. We are grateful!



A Message from Peter Whinfrey Chairman of the Board

Spectrios provides a valuable array of services to people of all ages facing vision loss, but these specialized services come at a significant cost. The fees we can bill for our comprehensive services—low vision doctors, occupational therapists, clinical technicians, insurance coordinators, and support staff—do not cover all expenses. Additionally, access technology support provided by Mark and Chris, though essential, does not generate substantial revenue as most folks use their own personal devices. Spectrios realizes only a small profit on the sale of traditional equipment like desktop magnifiers or closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems.

In total, 40% of our income stems from billable services, with the remaining 60% relying on donations, grants, and fundraising efforts. Every so often, but not often enough, we receive unsolicited bequests from grateful patients who include us in their estate plans, although this is not actively solicited as part of our fundraising.

Why give? There is nothing more rewarding than helping others. By planning ahead, you can leave a legacy that will ensure the long-term stability of our current vision programs, as well as expand our mission to serve future generations of persons with vision loss. Estate gifts strengthen Spectrios programs, allowing us to continue providing essential services and support. You may choose to support our mission broadly or designate your gift to specific programs like our “Seeing is Believing” children's outreach clinic, a compassion fund for low-income individuals, or access technology training.

Including Spectrios in your estate plan through a planned gift is a very simple legal process—I know, because I've done it myself. Spectrios' work has profoundly touched my life. It gives me great joy that a portion of my estate will ensure the continuation of their wonderful services long after I'm gone. A bequest is a meaningful way to express gratitude for Spectrios' expertise and life-changing assistance, providing hope to those impacted by vision loss, all without impacting your current finances.

Please give it some thought. For assistance, feel free to contact Teresa Crafton, Director of Development, at craftont@spectrios.org or 630-690-7115 ext. 102 and she will gladly address any questions you may have. Enjoy your summer, and don't forget about our annual Golf Classic on September 23! On behalf of the Spectrios Institute's Board of Directors, thank you for your continuous support.

God Bless,

Peter

When Magnification Alone Is Not Enough by Dr. Rachel Park, O.D.



"Doc, I read like a first grader," said Kevin, an adult male diagnosed with macular degeneration. His condition creates a ring-shaped blind spot in the center of his vision, causing words next to where he reads to disappear. Despite knowing that reading will become increasingly challenging over time, Kevin remains determined not to be held back. He's tried various over-the-counter magnifiers and reading glasses, but with little success.

Another patient, Sam, faces similar reading difficulties despite having a different diagnosis—non-arteritic anterior ischemic optic neuropathy (NAION). Sam experienced sudden vision loss in both eyes, one eye after the other in a short period of time. Despite visiting multiple vision clinics and trying high-power reading glasses and a hand-held magnifier, he continues to struggle. Regardless of the level of magnification, words appear very faint, making reading almost impossible for him.

Both Kevin and Sam, though affected by different ocular diseases, share common challenges with reading due to significant contrast sensitivity (CS) loss. CS is crucial for perceiving objects without clear outlines and distinguishing them from their backgrounds. It involves telling the difference between similar colors or shades of gray and recognizing objects separately from their surroundings. When CS is reduced, images can blend into their backgrounds, making them indistinguishable.

Loss of CS significantly impacts daily activities. Patients often describe their vision as "foggy" or find reading difficult, requiring bold black prints on white paper to read effectively. They may struggle to recognize faces or distinguish the mashed potatoes on their white plate.

While mild CS loss is a natural part of aging, diseases affecting the macula or optic nerve can lead to severe-to-profound impairment. As low vision optometrists, we specialize in assessing CS loss alongside evaluating visual acuity and visual field impairments. By accurately determining the severity of these issues, we can tailor solutions to enhance contrast perception for you, our patients. We can attempt to improve contrast by adding task lighting or prescribing specialized lenses with light yellow or amber tints which selectively filter light to improve contrast and reduce glare.

Continued on Page 5...

When Magnification Alone Is Not Enough by Dr. Rachel Park, O.D. continued...

Generally, optical magnification through high-power reading glasses or hand-held magnifiers, coupled with tinting, helps many low vision patients achieve their reading goals. However, for Kevin and Sam, these solutions weren't sufficient. Both responded significantly better to electronic magnification technologies. Using back-lit screens with reversed type, or white text on a black background, they required less magnification compared to optical devices. Electronic magnifiers proved to be the breakthrough that allowed both Kevin and Sam to read sentences and paragraphs with fluidity and accuracy.

Fortunately, Spectrios has a robust technology center equipped with a variety of electronic magnifiers in different sizes and functionalities. Access technology can be a great addition, or even substitution, to one's low vision "tool box" of traditional optical devices.

When appropriate, we encourage patients to consider scheduling an Access Technology appointment following their comprehensive low vision rehabilitation exam, offering back-to-back appointments on the same day whenever possible. If you're experiencing difficulties with reading or wish to explore how electronic magnifiers could benefit you, please call 630-690-7115 x 123 to schedule an appointment.

Can My Smartphone Be Easier to Use with Low Vision?

The most common smartphone question we get from patients is, "**Can you recommend a phone that is easier to use?**"

Most of the time, the best phone is the one you already have. For those with low vision, it's just about learning how to use it differently. Our Access Technology Specialists can adjust settings, add apps, and provide training to help you use your smartphone.

If it's been over two years since your last visit or your vision has changed, it might be time for a tune-up!

FREE TECH EVAL



Get expert guidance in selecting the most suitable low vision products to enhance your quality of life.

- Electronic Video Magnifiers
- Reading with Assistive Technology
- Smart Phone Training

Call 630-690-7115 for an appointment

Join us! Spectrios Annual Golf Classic September 23, 2024 | Prairie Landing Golf Club

Sponsored by:



Join us for golf and goodwill! Everyone is invited to this shamle-style event, but it sells out quickly so register today! We're thrilled to announce that Darrin Jackson, former MLB player and current radio voice for the Chicago White Sox, will be the Honorary Chairman for our golf event. Don't miss this opportunity to meet a sports legend, enjoy a fantastic day of golf, and give back to children and adults with vision loss! Visit www.spectrios.org/golf or contact Teresa Crafton, Director of Development, at craftont@spectrios.org or 630-690-7115 ext. 102.

Individual Golf Packages

- Birdie Package (One Foursome and Signage at One Hole).....\$1,900
- Foursome.....\$1,500
- Hole Sponsor.....\$500
- Individual Golfer.....\$450
- Reception Guest.....\$70

The Masters \$10,000

- Two (2) Foursomes
- **Recognition on Golf Cart Clings**
- **Priority Tee Placement**
- **Featured in Event Mailings**
- **VIP Coolers w/Preferred Beverage**
- **VIP Parking for Team Captain**
- One (1) Hole Sponsor Sign
- Logo on Event Signage and Event Website with Link
- Recognition During Event and on Social Media (1k reach)
- Logo on Spectrios Website and Brightside Newsletter (10k reach) for 1 Year

The Open \$7,500

- One (1) Foursome
- **VIP Coolers w/Preferred Beverage**
- **VIP Parking for Team Captain**
- One (1) Hole Sponsor Sign
- Logo on Event Signage and Event Website with Link
- Recognition During Event and on Social Media (1k reach)
- Logo on Spectrios Website and Brightside Newsletter (10k reach) for 6 mos.

The PGA \$5,000

- One (1) Foursome
- One (1) hole sponsor sign
- Logo on Event Signage and Event Website with Link
- Recognition on Social Media (1k reach)
- Logo in Brightside Newsletter (10k reach) for one (1) Issue

The Eagle \$2,500

- Exclusive Beverage, Luncheon, or Reception Sponsor with signage at event and at one (1) hole

Score for Sight: A Game Changer Gala

A heartfelt thank you to all the game changers who stepped up to the plate, adorned in their favorite team jerseys, and scored big for sight at our Annual Gala on April 20, 2024. Your support has profoundly impacted our mission, empowering children and adults with vision loss. The gala was a success, bringing hope to those with irreversible vision loss, thanks to generous donors like you.

Congratulations to the 2024 award winners recognized at this year's event:

- Dr. Richard G. Gieser, MD, recipient of the Partners with Vision Award
- Dr. Amjad Z. Ahmad, MD, recipient of the Dr. Eleanor Faye Award
- Hannah Dickson, recipient of the Clarence Troyer Volunteer of the Year Award



Thank You Score for Sight Gala Sponsors



Transportation: How to Get Where You're Going by Katrina Stratton OTR/L, Occupational Therapist

Transportation for non-drivers is something we think and talk a lot about at Spectrios. While we have many low vision drivers that we see annually at Spectrios, when driving isn't possible, for any reason, we want you to know there are other options.

Transportation options vary greatly depending on where you live, with access to inclusive public transportation being a prime example. We emphasize this to young people with vision loss, encouraging them to consider access to public transportation when planning for their future. Settling in urban areas or near commuter rail systems often offers improved transportation prospects as compared to settling in more rural or suburban areas.

Many of our patients rely on family, friends, and neighbors for rides to medical appointments, grocery stores, and other errands. We're exceptionally grateful to these drivers. Thanks to you, your loved ones have access to specialized care and low vision doctors, and they receive help in managing their low vision.

For those without such support, alternative transportation options are available through local townships and villages, or by taking taxis. And, with the rise of rideshare services like Uber and Lyft, on-demand transportation has never been more accessible... but it comes with a cost. That's why we are excited to share a NEW and cost-effective initiative with you!

Meet the Rideshare Access Program (RAP)

The Rideshare Access Program is a game-changer expansion of ADA paratransit that took effect in March. RTA-certified ADA paratransit riders can now order rides through the Uber app and pay just the first \$2.00 of a \$30 or less ride. Riders can order up to 8 rides per day, and if a ride is ever more than \$30, they will just be responsible for any portion of the trip that exceeds \$30. To use this accessible and affordable transportation option, the first thing you need to do is ensure that you are enrolled in RTA ADA Paratransit. Call the program at 312-663-4357 to apply. Once you've signed up for Paratransit, visit <https://www.pacebus.com/rap> and fill out the enrollment form to sign up for the Rideshare Access Program.

Finally, you need to install the Uber app on your phone. If you need to learn how to use the Uber app, or just navigating your mobile device, our team can help. Call us at 630-690-7115 to make an appointment with Mark or Chris, our access technology instructors. Bring your smartphone and try installing the Uber app before your appointment.

We hope you will find the RAP program beneficial and remember that Spectrios is always here to support you whether for low vision rehabilitation, daily living tips, new accessibility programs or assistive technology training.

Digital Magnifiers: Empowering Low Vision Solutions by Mark Chalmers

We mention digital magnifiers in at least one Bright Side newsletter every year. They are an extremely handy tool to have in our low vision toolbox. While fixed-strength optical magnifiers are very helpful for spot reading tasks, electronic digital magnifiers are more versatile. Not only do they allow us to customize the level of magnification, they also help overcome poor contrast. For example, I recently bought a bag of fish sticks. The cooking directions were in small, white print on a light blue background. It took a combination of higher magnification and a black-and-white contrast to figure out the proper cooking time and temperature.

Electronic digital magnifiers come in a wide range of sizes and styles. Here are just a few examples:

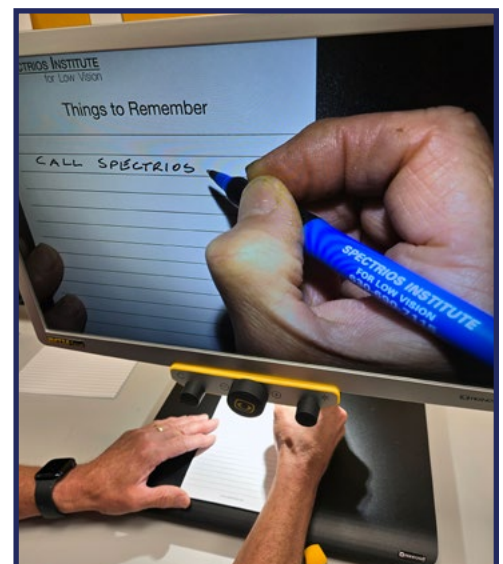
Our most popular handheld digital magnifier is the HumanWare Explore 5. It is easy to use, with only a few buttons that allow you to change the magnification level and contrast. I have one on my kitchen counter that I use multiple times every day for tasks like sorting through the mail, reading cooking instructions, checking medication labels, and adjusting the thermostat. My favorite feature of this device is the handle, which allows me to hold and adjust the magnification with one hand while holding something in the other.



Explore 5 Handheld Magnifier

The Explore 12 is a portable, tablet-sized digital magnifier that includes a stand. The stand provides space to write or do other hobbies. The magnifier and stand are lightweight and fit into the included carrying case.

New to our technology center is the Mezzo Focus desktop magnifier. If you enjoy writing, solving word puzzles, or engaging in other hobbies, you'll want to try this device. With a high-definition camera and a high-resolution monitor it provides a realistic image of objects like your hands. It is available in screen sizes ranging from 16 to 24 inches and it can focus on a piece of paper and your hand simultaneously without needing to refocus. If this sounds confusing, you really need to come and check it out for yourself. Call to schedule an appointment and we'd be happy to show you this and other devices and teach you how everything can be used in your daily life.



Mezzo Focus Desktop Magnifier

In Honor and Memory

A donation has been made in memory or honor of the following persons:
(Name in bold print, donor name in regular print)

In Memory of:

Charles R. "Charlie" Smith

Paul Singer

Katherine Hickman

Ann Bidwell

Heidren Bernard

Elke Nicholls

Allan W. & Priscilla B. Ditchfield

Diane O'Connor

Terry McIlroy

Wendy Dunn

Penelope Bernstein

Mary M. Gant

Sheryl Hoyer

Kelly A. Burnoski

Edward Williams

Marylene Maier Winter

Deborah Lundgren

John O'Connell

Karen Thomas

Kristine Shoemaker

In Honor of:

Advanced Eye Care, SC

Timothy A. Kisla

Dr. Richard Gieser

Dr. Susan Anderson-Nelson

Marlene Klingner

Suzanne Mercer

Dr. Tracy Williams

George Powers

Carol and Steven Edelson

Peter Whinfrey

Mr. & Mrs. James R. Flynn

Thomas Flynn

Porterfield Family Gift Fund

Phil McDaniel

Deanna McDaniel

Philip Gates

Elizabeth Toombs

Susan Bernstein

Howard Bernstein

Join Our Low Vision Support Groups!

Aug. 2, 10:30 am CT: Meet the Doctor! Join us to meet Spectrios Institute's newest Optometrist, Dr. Catherine Kerr-Niermann, OD, MS, FAAO.

Sept. 6, 10:30 am CT: Ryan Quilty of Dare2tri (www.dare2tri.org), will speak about fitness and swimming, biking, and running with visual impairments.

Sept. 11, 7:00 pm CT: Join Mark and Chris for a conversation around the latest aids, apps and other technology tools that can help you navigate life with low vision.

Oct. 4, 10:30 am CT: Bebe Novich, Senior Attorney for Voting Rights at Equip for Equality, Inc. (www.equipforequality.org), will discuss accessible voting, your rights, and new developments in voting for people with vision impairments.

Support is just a call away! Visit www.spectrios.org/support to sign-up and join us in a space filled with guidance, connection and empowerment.



The Last Word: “Hole-in-One” Whinny by Dr. R. Tracy Williams, O.D.

You’ve heard of Winnie-the-Pooh, but have you heard of his very, very distant cousin, “Hole-in-One” Whinny? Both stem from England, share good humor, are gentle, kind, and charitable, and are ready to meet any challenge they may encounter in their daily adventures. Unlike our sighted Pooh Bear, “Hole-in-One” Whinny is legally blind due to Stargardt’s Macular Dystrophy. However, he’s not confined to his Hundred Acre Wood. Despite his vision loss and inability to drive, he uses his other senses, great tactile abilities, and white cane to get around independently. No whining from Whinny. He remains gainfully employed. He goes to church and prays for others, along with his favorite baseball team, the Chicago White Sox—who could use all our prayers. He has a knack for goofing off and telling funny jokes. He is grateful for the good advice and training he has gained at Spectrios Institute and strives to be a good example to others as a “can-do” visually impaired person. Whinny lives his life to the fullest. He does not victimize himself because of his congenital vision loss. He wants only to be judged by his head and his heart, not his vision loss. For others, Whinny is a true inspiration.

I recently had the opportunity to hang out with “Hole-in-One” Whinny on the golf course, one of his favorite places. We had a 10:10 am tee-off, and the weather was not cooperating...rain!!! The most rugged golfers hid in the clubhouse, but not Whinny. No lightning, no tornados, no sirens...no worries! Off we went in our rain gear with Whinny’s special high-contrast clubs, balls, tees, and ball markers. I had the privilege of lining Whinny up before he took a smooth, powerful swing, sending his ball far past my shot. I think about lining him up slightly off-target when he’s getting too much enjoyment beating the tar out of me. But I resist that urge because the golf lesson and experience I get soon remind me how lucky I am to be around a person like Whinny! When we hang out, it becomes clear to me that people can be their worst critics, limiting what they can do.

So many times, with the occurrence of vision loss, people give up the FUN activities that gave them so much pleasure and purpose. It’s sad to witness. Whinny is a prime example that you must believe in yourself and have a little faith that you can live and grow as a person no matter what challenges life brings. Despite vision loss, he chooses to live, laugh, and help others.

Join me and meet “Hole-in-One” Whinny on the golf course for our annual golf classic that benefits Spectrios's mission to support children and adults with vision loss. By participating, you too can choose FUN and help others. Mark your calendars for Monday, September 23rd, at Prairie Landing Golf Club—we can't wait to see you there! - Tracy

P.S. Why is Whinny known as “Hole-in-One” Whinny?
So far, he has three holes in one!!!



Spectrios Institute for Low Vision
at Deicke House
219 E. Cole Avenue
Wheaton, IL 60187

**35 years of serving people
with vision loss!**

THE BRIGHTSIDE NEWSLETTER



Grandma Martyl Reinsdorf: Bringing Smiles to Children Everywhere

Martyl Reinsdorf, fondly known as "Grandma Martyl," was an extraordinary humanitarian and beloved member of the Spectrios Family. She committed herself passionately to brightening the lives of children globally through her creative initiatives, crafting and delivering coloring books and toys to hospitals, orphanages, and shelters worldwide. Spectrios proudly upholds her legacy by continuing to supply coloring books to students in our Seeing is Believing (SIB) in-school low vision clinics, ensuring Grandma Martyl's profound influence perseveres. While she may be gone, her spirit lives on.



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