



SPECTRIOS INSTITUTE FOR LOW VISION

THE BRIGHTSIDE

VOLUME 1 | MARCH 2025



Follow the yellow brick road to the **Emerald City Gala**, celebrating **20 years of Partners with Vision!** Enjoy an unforgettable evening with raffles, auctions, awards, guest speakers, and inspiring stories—all in support of Spectrios' mission to empower children and adults with vision loss.

A night of hope and transformation awaits in the Emerald City! Scan the QR code or visit www.spectrios.org/gala to register.



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Your Gratitude, Their Hope Grateful Patient Program

You know firsthand the life-changing impact of Spectrios. Now, you have the opportunity to give back and ensure others receive the same support. Through the Grateful Patient Program, you can share your story to inspire hope, honor a caregiver who made a difference, or make a donation that provides vital services to those in need.

Your generosity funds essential programs like free low vision exams for students, adaptive technology training, and financial assistance for those who can't afford care. Whether it's a one-time gift, a monthly contribution, or planned giving, every act of gratitude creates a ripple effect of empowerment and independence.

Join us in building a brighter future. Your story, donation, or tribute can change lives. Learn more at www.spectrios.org/donate.

Your support can transform the life of someone with vision loss.



Empower Lives Today! Scan the QR code to donate and help provide vital tools and life-changing services for children and adults with low vision. Every gift drives our mission to break barriers and inspire potential.
Say YES to making a difference now!





A Message from Peter Whinfrey Chairman of the Board

As Chairman of the Board at Spectrios, I have the privilege of witnessing firsthand the incredible impact of our mission. Despite my own journey with vision loss, I strive to be a strong leader, championing the work that transforms lives every day.

As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of our Gala, it is important to reflect on how it all began. Our Gala is a testament to the power of community, generosity, and shared purpose—a legacy that started with our founder, Dr. P.K. Gieser, recognizing the need. His visually impaired patient, Edwin Deicke, and Edwin's wife, Lois, provided the first significant gift to support this new specialty of vision care, launching the Deicke Center.

Dr. R. Tracy Williams was recruited to establish the Deicke Center in April 1986 due to his training with Eleanor E. Faye, M.D., a leader in low vision rehabilitation. Our first Board Chairman, Dr. David Gieser, provided key early leadership for over a decade, and with Dr. Richard Gieser's support, our academic and international impact grew significantly.

Our first Gala in 2005 celebrated what we can accomplish when we come together. That year, we honored the legacy of our founders and many partners. Today, as Spectrios Institute for Low Vision, we remain true to our roots while expanding our reach and impact.

Over the years, the Gala has become a critical fundraising event, fueling our programs and services. It enables us to provide comprehensive visual rehabilitation and outreach programs that empower individuals with permanent vision loss. None of this would be possible without the support of our incredible donors, partners, and friends.

As we gather for the 20th Annual Emerald City Gala on April 26, we invite you to celebrate with us. Your support ensures we can continue providing specialized care that makes independence possible for so many.

Thank you for opening your hearts to our mission and believing in our work. I look forward to celebrating with you in the Emerald City. Fun fact: I haven't missed a Gala yet, but this is the first year I'll be dressed in green!

More details on the event and ways to support us can be found in the pages ahead. I hope you can attend! God Bless.

Peter



THE *20th* ANNUAL PARTNERS WITH VISION GALA
EMERALD CITY GALA



We invite you to be part of a truly special evening—our annual Partners with Vision Gala. This year marks a major milestone—the **20th anniversary** of this incredible event, where we come together to celebrate those who help us transform lives.

For two decades, we've gathered to honor resilience, generosity, and impact. In celebration of this milestone, we've chosen **The Emerald City** as our theme. The **emerald** symbolizes growth, renewal, and the unwavering spirit of those we serve. It's also a traditional gift for a 20-year anniversary. And what better way to commemorate this occasion than with inspiration from **the great Wizard of Oz**—where the Emerald City represents the pursuit of something greater. This aligns perfectly with our mission to create a better world through philanthropy.

On **Saturday, April 26, 2025**, at the **Sheraton Lisle Naperville Hotel**, we will gather to celebrate stories of resilience and further our mission to empower children and adults with vision loss. Through our **head, heart, and eye approach** to rehabilitation, we strive to **serve as many individuals as possible**—regardless of their financial means. But **we can't do it alone**—your support will make this night a success and help change lives!

A Legacy of Impact: Our first gala, the 2005 Sights and Sounds Gala, blended music and philanthropy, setting the stage for two decades of impact. Over the years, this event has evolved into a powerful force for change, raising critical funds to provide **financial assistance** to adults with low vision so they can receive the essential care they need to thrive.

Your support also helps fund programs like **Seeing is Believing**, which provides **free low vision exams and devices** to K-12 students across Illinois.

Today, **60% of our funding** comes from donations and grants, making this gala a vital pillar of our mission's success.

Honoring Our 2025 Award Recipients: Each year at our galas, we recognize extraordinary individuals whose dedication and service align with our mission. This year's honorees include:

- **Partners with Vision Award: Charlie Smith** – A passionate advocate for individuals with vision loss. Charlie, a patient of Spectrios truly understands the impact of Spectrios and works tirelessly to spread awareness.

- **Clarence E. Troyer Volunteer of the Year Award: Debbie Gregorash** – Debbie’s commitment to our mission is felt across our organization, from serving on our Board of Directors to volunteering on committees and at special events.
- **Special Guest Speakers** – Hear an inspiring story from a Spectrios patient and a student from our Seeing is Believing program.

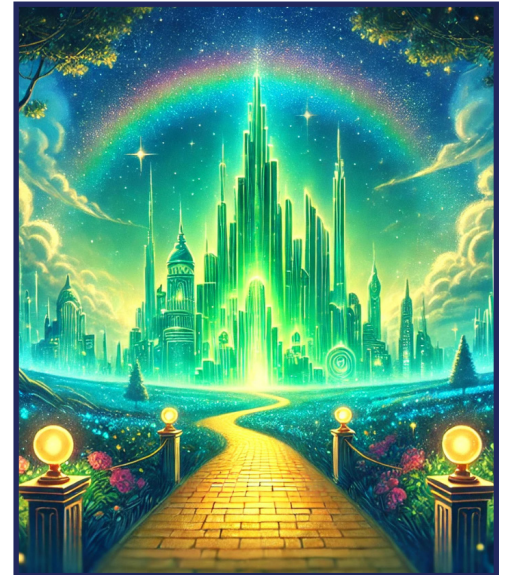
How YOU Can Make a Difference

This night is more than just a gala—it’s a chance to change lives. Here’s how you can get involved:

Attend the Gala

Enjoy an evening filled with inspiration and opportunities to make a difference. Bid on exciting auction items, hear powerful success stories, and celebrate alongside fellow supporters.

- **Individual Ticket:** \$150
- **Patient Ticket:** \$75
- **Table Host** (Table of 10): \$1,500



Become a Sponsor

Our sponsorship opportunities provide meaningful recognition while directly supporting us:

- **Emerald Visionary** (\$7,500) – The ultimate supporter, leading the way like the Wizard of Oz himself! Includes two tables (20 tickets), premier seating, program advertising, and social media exposure.
- **Golden Heart** (\$5,000) – Inspired by the Tin Man’s heart, recognizing those with a big heart for giving. Includes one table (10 tickets), program advertising, and event signage.
- **Courageous Advocate** (\$2,500) – Honoring bold supporters, just like the Lion’s courage. Includes five tickets, program advertisement, and recognition.

Donate an Auction Item

Help us reach our fundraising goals by donating sought-after items like hotel stays, airline miles, dining experiences, or electronics. Your generosity provides exciting bidding opportunities that directly contribute to our mission.

A Night to Remember!

We encourage attendees to **wear semi-formal attire with a touch of green** in honor of our Emerald City theme. Let’s make this a dazzling celebration of 20 years of impact! As Dorothy and her friends journeyed down the **Yellow Brick Road** in search of courage, heart, wisdom, and home, we too are on a path—one that leads to empowering lives through vision care. In the Emerald City, dreams become reality—your generosity fuels Spectrios’ mission to change lives! **Get Your Tickets Today!** Visit [Spectrios.org/gala](https://www.spectrios.org/gala) or contact our Event Director, Stacey Lewis, at staceyl@lewiseventsanddesign.com or 773-998-9873 with any questions.

Seeing Clearly: Trial Frame Refraction by Dr. Rachel Park, OD

When the shape of your eye prevents light from focusing properly on the retina, it results in a **refractive error**—a common vision problem that can cause blurry vision, squinting, headaches, eye strain, and difficulty focusing.

During a routine eye exam, your doctor may check for refractive errors using a standard refraction test—often called the “**which is better, one or two?**” test. This involves looking through a machine with different lenses while reading letters on an eye chart. While this method works well for many people, it has limitations—especially for those with low vision or more complex vision needs.



At Spectrios, we take a more specialized approach using Complex Vision Rehabilitation Refraction, which includes **trial frame refraction** as a key part of our low vision exam.

A trial frame is an adjustable glasses frame that holds different lenses, allowing for a more accurate prescription. Instead of looking through a machine, patients wear the trial frame like regular glasses while testing different lenses. Trial frame refraction offers three key advantages:

1. **More Natural Testing Conditions** – Patients can maintain their normal posture while looking through the lenses. This is especially beneficial for individuals with involuntary eye movements (nystagmus), reduced central vision, or physical limitations.
2. **Better Lens Comparisons** – The doctor can quickly swap out lenses to show noticeable differences, helping patients feel more confident when answering, “Which is better, one or two?”
3. **Accurate Lens Positioning** – Trial frames allow for accurate measurement of vertex distance—the space between the back of the lens and the front of the eye. This measurement is critical for high refractive error prescriptions, as even small changes in lens distance can impact the clarity and strength of vision correction.

Because trial frame refraction provides a **more precise prescription**, we encourage all patients to go through this process—even if they’ve recently had a standard refraction elsewhere. A new prescription can significantly enhance vision and daily life. In some cases, trial frame refraction also helps determine if additional low vision tools, such as magnifiers, telescopes, or assistive technology, could further improve vision. Let’s find the best solution for your vision needs!

What Are Ray-Ban Meta Glasses?

by Mark Chalmers, Access Technology Manager

We've been getting a lot of questions about **Ray-Ban Meta Glasses**—and for good reason. The **Meta AI feature** has caught the attention of the blind and low-vision community for its ability to assist with everyday tasks.

These glasses have **built-in cameras** and were originally designed for capturing and sharing moments on Facebook. Now, with AI integration, they can identify objects, describe scenes, and summarize printed material.

They pair with your smartphone via **Bluetooth** and use the **Meta View app**. Ask a question, and the AI searches the internet, relaying the answer through the glasses' **built-in speakers**.

How Can They Help If I Have Low Vision?

- **Identify** items in a supermarket, pantry, or fridge
- **Find** specific objects—for example, “Where’s the milk?”
- **Read mail**—summarizes printed material and reads short text word-for-word (but struggles with long-form reading)
- **Read menus**, as long as the lighting is sufficient

Pros:

- Hands-free convenience – While a smartphone can perform similar tasks, the glasses allow for hands-free use.
- Open-ear audio – Speakers near your temples let you hear responses without disturbing others while staying aware of your surroundings—helpful if you rely on VoiceOver, TalkBack, Siri, or Google Assistant.

Cons:

- Limited text reading – Currently struggle with reading long-form text (like this newsletter).
- Lighting sensitivity – They don't work well in low-light settings, such as dim restaurants.
- Prescription limitations – Prescription lenses are available, but some low-vision prescriptions may not fit.

Want to Try Them?

As of now, Spectrios does not sell Ray-Ban Meta Glasses. However, if you'd like to test them before purchasing, call us at 630-690-7115 and schedule an appointment with Chris or me. We'd be happy to let you try them and explore other assistive devices.



Outside-the-Box Tips, Tricks and Tools by Katrina Stratton OTR/L

As part of Spectrios' comprehensive low vision program, occupational therapy helps patients build independence and confidence in their daily lives. I work closely with each patient to find practical solutions that make everyday tasks more manageable.

One of the most rewarding parts of my work is problem-solving. I meet with patients to break down everyday tasks into their essential parts—a process called activity analysis. The goal? To find creative ways to make daily activities easier and more accessible. By adapting tasks to match a patient's abilities, we can discover new ways to navigate the challenges of vision loss. Over the years, I've come across quite a few outside-the-box low vision solutions—here are some of my favorites:

Silicone Cupcake Baking Cups

These little cups aren't just for baking! Their high-contrast colors and flexible material make them a great tool for managing medications. Pour a handful of pills into one while sorting your weekly pill box to keep them from rolling off the table or slipping through your fingers. Need to return extras to the bottle? Gently pinch the sides to create a handy pouring spout. You can also use a silicone baking cup as a designated spot for your daily dose—just be sure to choose a dark color so lighter pills stand out against the background and are easy to count.

Bright, Solid-Colored Phone Case

It's easy to misplace a phone, especially when it blends into counter tops, tables, or bedspreads. A vibrant phone case that contrasts with the most used surfaces in your home makes it much easier to spot!

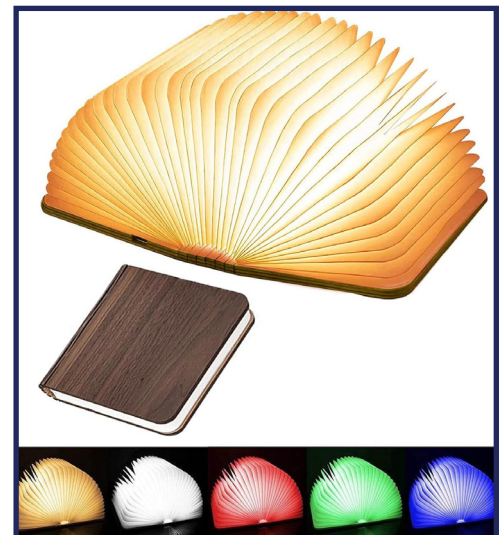
Portable Folding Book Lamp

Dining out can be tricky when many restaurants favor dim, moody lighting. A compact, rechargeable folding book lamp provides discreet, personal lighting right at your table. This small but powerful tool can make reading menus and enjoying your meal much easier—without disrupting the ambiance.

Handheld Mirrors

If seeing your face or hair in a bathroom mirror above the sink is a challenge, try using a handheld mirror instead. Bringing it closer to your face provides natural magnification.

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If you have light-colored hair and white bathroom walls, try using a handheld mirror in a well-lit space with a dark background—this contrast makes it easier to spot details, like a stray hair or a bit of toothpaste in the corner of your mouth.

Rubber Bands

There's a good chance you have a junk drawer with a few stray rubber bands—put them to use! Rubber bands are an easy, low-cost way to differentiate between similar bottles and containers without needing to read the label. Wrap one around your shampoo bottle to distinguish it from conditioner, or place a rubber band around your strawberry jam so you don't mix it up with raspberry. This simple trick is just one tactile cue you can use to make everyday tasks easier.

There are so many creative solutions that can make daily life easier with vision loss. I truly enjoy collaborating with patients to find the right tools and techniques that are going to fit their personal needs. If you're struggling with a particular task, let's problem-solve together—reach out for an occupational therapy appointment today!

Summer Programs for Kids with Low Vision Registration Now Open!

We're excited to announce **registration is open** for our two fantastic summer programs for teens with low vision, designed to help them gain confidence, independence, and make lasting connections!

Grandma Martyl Transition Talks

Is your graduating student unsure about what comes next after high school? These interactive Zoom talks are a great opportunity to explore topics like transportation, cooking, and self-advocacy for those with low vision! We'll meet Tuesdays from 6–7:30 PM on June 3rd, 10th, 17th, and 24th.



Grandma Martyl Low Vision Day Camp

We invite rising 6th–12th graders to join us for a fun-filled week at camp! They'll make friends, explore access tech, and participate in activities and field trips. Camp runs from July 14th–18th, 9 AM–3:30 PM at Spectrios Institute (Wheaton, IL).

To register or for more information, contact Jennifer Thompson, Children's Programs Coordinator, at 630-690-7115 or ThompsonJ@Spectrios.org.

A BIG thank you to the Reinsdorf family for supporting these programs in honor of Grandma Martyl Reinsdorf!



In Honor and Memory

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

In Honor of:

Dr. Tracy Williams

Dr & Mrs Kenneth M. Baylor
Morris & Lillian P. Gould Family Foundation

Melissa Taussig

Mrs Richard H Lentfer

In Memory of:

Benjamin Cutshall

Carol A. Garcia

Jack McCleary

L. McCleary

Mortin Levy

Karen & Mort Levy

Tina Norkus

Cate & Justin Schenck
Kirkland & Ellis LLP

Save the Date: 2025 Spectrios Golf Classic September 8th!

Mark your calendars for **Monday, September 8th!** This highly anticipated event will take place at the historic and scenic **Glen Oak Country Club**, offering a day of golf, camaraderie, and a chance to make a real difference for those with vision loss.

Reflecting on the 2024 event, we had an unforgettable day at Prairie Landing, where guests enjoyed a fantastic time on the greens while supporting Spectrios's mission. We were deeply grateful for celebrity guests, including Chicago White Sox legends Darrin Jackson, Jim Thome, Len Casper, Gene Honda, Herm Schneider, Chris Flexen, and Mike Gellinger. Their presence, support, and generosity made the day even more meaningful!

If you missed the 2024 event, don't worry—be sure to join us in 2025! Keep an eye on our website, spectrios.org/golf-fundraiser, for further details as they become available. You can also view event photos from 2024 there now!

We're calling for participants, sponsors, and in-kind donors to help make our 2025 outing a success. Whether you're interested in participating, contributing a donation, or exploring sponsorship opportunities, we'd love to hear from you!

Thank you to our **2024 Golf Outing Sponsors:**





The Last Word: Finding Purpose at a Feel Good Mission

It's hard to believe that 2025 marks our mission's 39th year of serving children and adults with vision loss. And thanks to our development staff, we'll soon be celebrating our 20th Gala Event!

If you want to witness a true "Feel-Good Mission," join us April 26th for our Emerald City Gala—and wear green! Lots of heartwarming fun awaits!

But wait a minute... 39 years have already gone by?! Does time really fly when you're having fun? At our Feel-Good Mission, it sure does!

I just hope I've contributed more than I've goofed off!!! One thing I do know—it's been a real privilege to work here. Some say, "Work is work—just a necessity to pay the bills." Here's my response to that:

We all have a gift. For me, it took a while to find. But keep searching—because once you find it, you're no longer working. You've found purpose.

The fruits of your labor will include sharing your gift passionately, witnessing the joy of others, and making new friends every day. You impact their lives, and they impact yours.

At the end of each day, you'll know you've been part of something special. In my case, it's a nonprofit mission called Spectrios Institute for Low Vision Rehabilitation at the Deicke House of Hope. Over the years, we've provided more than 25,000 appointments to people with vision loss and served over 10,000 children in schools across Illinois.

As my late friend Bob Hammerschmitt, who was legally blind, once told me:

"All of us are born for a reason, but not all of us discover why success in life has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself—It's what you do for others."

So true!!! It's a joy to work!!!

Please join us at our Emerald City Gala and support our mission. Don't make me send the Flying Monkeys after you! It will be a night filled with purpose.

Thank you!



35 years of serving people with vision loss!

Spectrios Institute for Low Vision
at Deicke House of Hope
219 E. Cole Avenue
Wheaton, IL 60187
www.spectrios.org



Electronic Service Requested

Please contact our office if you have corrections to your address. Thank you!



SUPPORT GROUPS



Topics - First Fridays - 10:30 AM CT

Technology Support

Second Wednesdays - 7:00 PM CT

Chat Group

Third Wednesdays - 7:00 PM CT



JOIN US IN OUR MISSION
TO EMPOWER LIVES,
FOSTER INDEPENDENCE
AND IGNITE HOPE FOR
CHILDREN AND ADULTS
WITH VISION LOSS.

You can donate online at
www.spectrios.org/donate
or scan the QR code to make
a donation on your device.

