



— SPECTRIOS INSTITUTE FOR LOW VISION —

THE BRIGHTSIDE

VOLUME 2 | JULY 2025



What a night! Your support celebrated courage, compassion, and community—with \$37,000 raised for children’s low vision services alone.

Pictured: “Seeing Is Believing” student Pan with Executive Director Dr. Tracy Williams and Board Chair Peter Whinfrey. Together, we’re helping children like Pan access life-changing care.

Flip inside to see more photos, meet our honorees, and relive the magic of our Emerald City Gala!

Table of Contents

Article:	Page:
A Message from Chairman Peter Whinfrey.....	Page 3
Golfing with Vision Loss.....	Page 4
Join Us for Golf for Sight. Give with Heart.....	Page 5
Finding the Right Tint: Managing Light Sensitivity...	Page 6
Making Technology Work for You.....	Page 7
How OT Supports Your Daily Life.....	Page 8
In Honor and Memory.....	Page 9
A Night to Remember: Our Emerald City Gala.....	Page 10
The Last Word from Dr. R. Tracy Williams.....	Page 11

Meet Our New Director of Development

We're thrilled to welcome Sandy Wolfrum to the Spectrios team as our new Director of Development!

Sandy brings over 25 years of nonprofit leadership experience, with a career spanning the American Heart Association, National Safety Council, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, and ISSA Charities. Her background includes strategic fundraising, event planning, community partnerships, and donor engagement.

At Spectrios, she will lead efforts to grow our community of support and secure the resources needed to expand access to life-changing care for individuals with vision loss.



"This work is deeply personal to me," Sandy shared. "With two uncles who experienced vision loss, I'm honored to be part of this important mission—giving adults and children hope and help. I'm proud to connect passion with purpose and ensure we have the funding to serve as many people as possible."

Sandy's talent for building strong relationships and driving mission-focused growth makes her a tremendous asset to Spectrios.

We encourage you to reach out and connect with her! Whether you'd like to give, know a foundation aligned with our mission, or want to explore ways to help, Sandy is eager to hear from you. You can reach her at 630-690-7115 ext. 102 or wolfrums@spectrios.org. Together, we can climb the mountain ahead and change lives through vision care.

A Message from Peter Whinfrey Chairman of the Board

Family business recently took my wife Jane and I to south central Ontario. We entered Canada at the Peace Bridge border crossing just outside of Buffalo NY, and before returning to the States, we decided to spend a day and overnight at Niagara Falls just north of the crossing.

When I gazed at this natural wonder, a peaceful feeling came over me. My lack of visual acuity wasn't deterring my enjoyment of the scene. Rather, the roar of the falls and the mist that rises enlivened my other senses.

Whether looking at the Fox River, the corn fields of our neighboring farms, or the Gulf in Naples, FL, a panoramic view is always restful—I really enjoy a “big picture.”



The Spectrios mantra,

“You are not defined by your vision loss but rather by what ticks in your head and beats in your chest,”

is another aspect of the big picture that I really appreciate. The many blessings in my life - my family, friends, business associates and mission partners, my role as Board Chairman of Spectrios, help me remember that vision loss is only a small part in my life's big picture.

As increasing numbers of people in our communities are experiencing age-related vision loss, it is incumbent on all of us to provide the necessary resources so that Spectrios can broaden its outreach and expand its services to meet this growing demand. Your continued support is more vital than ever. And, that is the really big picture.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you for sharing in our mission.

God bless,

Peter

Help others see the beauty in their big picture—give today at www.spectrios.org/gift.



As you know, at Spectrios, our mission is to help people with vision loss live fully, independently, and with purpose. That includes staying active and doing the things they love—like playing golf. Because we don't just treat the eyes—we support the whole person.

Many people are surprised to learn how adaptable sports can be, golf included. With the right support and a few adjustments, individuals with vision loss can—and do—play the game with confidence, skill, and joy.

So, how does a visually impaired person golf?

Most golfers with vision loss play with a sighted guide, coach, or partner who assists with alignment, describes the course layout, and provides feedback on direction, terrain, and distance. Once oriented, the golfer swings independently and their partner helps track the ball.

A few key strategies can make a big difference:

- Use a brightly colored neon ball—orange, yellow, or lime green—for better visibility.
- Focus on sound, feel, and muscle memory to develop a consistent swing.
- Practice tracking yardages and mentally visualizing the hole layout.
- Pay close attention to the feel and feedback of the club striking the ball.
- Play familiar courses whenever possible to reduce uncertainty and build confidence.

With time, encouragement, and practice, many visually impaired golfers develop impressive skills and a deep love for the game. It's a powerful reminder that vision loss doesn't mean giving up the activities you enjoy—it just means doing them differently.

Take Peter Whinfrey, our Board Chairman, for example. Diagnosed with Stargardt disease, he hasn't let vision loss stop him from enjoying the game he loves. To adapt, he marks his larger clubs with a stripe, helping his coach align the ball with the center of the club head.

Continued on Page 5...



We invite you to hit the course and meet the growing number of golfers with visual impairments who join us each year—playing right alongside their sighted peers. Their determination and love for the game shine at what's our most exciting event of the year.

This year marks our 30th Annual Golf Classic, proudly named "Golf for Sight. Give with Heart." Join us on Monday, September 8th, at the historic Glen Oak Country Club in Glen Ellyn (pictured on Page 4) for a day to remember.

Here's what's in store:

- A memorable day on a stunning, members-only course
- Shamble format play with exciting on-course contests, including a Hole-in-One challenge to win Dr. Williams' iconic yellow Thunderbird!!
- Meet and mingle with MLB legends and celebrity guests—snap a photo and hear stories from Jim Thome, Darrin Jackson, Len Kasper, and more surprise guests
- Fuel up with a full day of hospitality: breakfast, lunch, and a lively cocktail reception included
- Bid on one-of-a-kind experiences and prizes during our auction and raffle
- Most importantly, be part of something bigger—your participation directly supports life-changing care for people living with vision loss

Pick Your Package:

- Individual Golfer – \$500
- Foursome – \$1,800
- Birdie Package – \$2,500 (Foursome + Sponsor Hole Sign)

Want to sponsor? Packages start at \$750 and help put your name in front of local supporters while fueling life-changing low vision care through Spectrios Institute for Low Vision.

Whether you're on the green for fun, for the cause, or to prove that vision loss doesn't mean giving up the game you love—this day is about showing what's possible.

Register early (this event sells out). Visit www.spectrios.org/golf or contact Sandy Wolfrum at 630-690-7115 x 102 or wolfrums@spectrios.org for more information. Let's golf with heart—and give hope!

THANK YOU "THE MASTERS" SPONSORS



Finding the Right Tint: Managing Light Sensitivity by Dr. Rachel Park, OD

Summer sun should feel warm and welcoming, but for many people with low vision, it can bring pain, squinting, and blurred sightlines.

I always ask my patients if and when they are bothered by light and glare. The answers vary, but the result is almost always the same—discomfort and difficulty seeing clearly.

“Sunlight is terrible—it hurts my eyes.”

“Bright days bleach out everything.”

“Cloudy days make it hard to see anything.”

“Walking from outside into a dim restaurant, I can’t see well enough to move safely.”



Managing glare isn't as simple as putting on dark sunglasses. In fact, for people with low vision, very dark lenses can make things worse by limiting already reduced vision. That's why many patients stop wearing sunglasses altogether. And here's something many people don't realize: darker lenses don't always offer better protection.

At Spectrios, we use high-quality filters that block UV light, reduce glare, and enhance contrast—without compromising usable vision. These filters come in various colors, each with specific benefits. For example, amber, yellow, or orange filters often help boosting contrast. Gray or gray-green filters can reduce glare while maintaining natural color perception. Plum, purple, or topaz filters can reduce glare for certain eye conditions.



Finding the right filter is personal. We evaluate different tints in real-world lighting conditions—indoors and outdoors—and consider your diagnosis, vision level, and lifestyle. Many patients benefit from having multiple filter options for different environments. Wrap-around fit-over style frames are preferred as they provide the most protection by blocking exposure from all angles.

Whether it's harsh sunlight or indoor lighting, the impact on daily life is real. But with the right filter, you can feel more confident and comfortable in any light—and we're here to help you find it.

Making Technology Work for You by Mark Chalmers, Access Technology Manager

We live in a digital world. Staying connected through email and social media, shopping online, or browsing the internet is just part of everyday life.

But for people with low vision, using a computer can often be frustrating.

Laptops are one of the most common devices we see our patients using. But they come with challenges—small screens and low-contrast keyboards that are hard to see.

If you're like me, you may find yourself hunched over your laptop trying to read the screen or find the right keys. That can lead to eye strain, sore necks, and back pain.

The good news is there are simple ways to adjust your setup.

Start by connecting your laptop to a larger external monitor. A bigger screen is easier to see and more comfortable to use.

I also recommend a large-print keyboard or adding high-contrast stickers. Oversized letters help make keys easier to spot—especially if you glance down when you type like I do.

You can also mount your monitor on an adjustable arm. That makes it easy to position the screen at just the right height and distance.

Don't forget to explore your computer's built-in accessibility tools. Both Windows and Apple have great options. You can magnify your screen, change colors and contrast, enlarge your cursor, use voice dictation, or have text read out loud.

These are just a few easy ways to make your computer work better for you. In fact, I used many of them to write this article. But, everyone's needs are different. Your setup will depend on your device, your comfort with technology, and your goals.

That's where we come in. You can schedule an appointment with me or Chris to explore options that fit your needs. We'll guide you through all the details—more than we can cover here. Call us at 630-690-7115 to get started!



How OT Supports Your Daily Life by Katrina Stratton OTR/L

Occupational Therapy (OT) has been an important part of Spectrios' comprehensive services for over a decade.

That said, many patients have questions when one of our Doctors refers them to OT. You might be wondering: What does an Occupational Therapist do? How can OT help me?

Let me introduce myself! I'm Katrina, the OT here at Spectrios. And if we haven't met yet, I'd love to share a little about what I do and how it fits into your low vision care.

Just like you have questions for us, I'll have plenty for you. Most people are surprised during their first OT visit by just how many questions I ask—about your home, your daily routines, your job, hobbies, support system... even your pets!

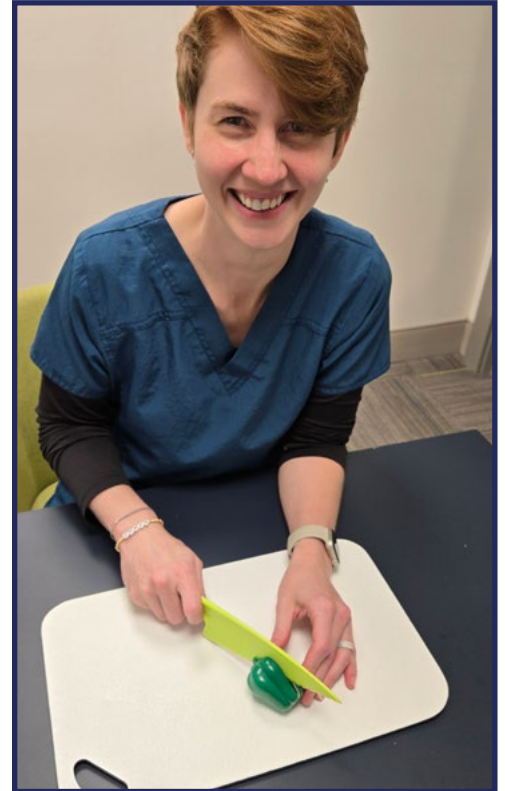
But there's a reason behind all the questions.

As an occupational therapist, my job is to help you stay safe, confident, and independent while doing the things that matter most in your life. I often tell people, "It's my job to take a deep dive into your everyday activities." Because that's where vision challenges tend to show up.

Maybe that's in the backyard—how can gardening be safer and more enjoyable with vision changes? In the bathroom—how can taking medications be safer? Or in your hobbies and social life—how can we help you stay engaged and independent?

My role is to understand how you live and help make that life more manageable and enjoyable, with strategies and tools that work for you.

For example, vision changes can make once-simple routines feel more challenging. Cooking becomes a safety concern when it's hard to see the edge of a knife or tell ingredients apart. In those cases, we might recommend using high-contrast tools—like a light-colored cutting board on a dark counter, or a dark board for light-colored foods—to improve visibility and reduce risk. Grocery shopping can also become overwhelming, so we might explore labeling systems or apps that make lists easier to manage.



Continued on Page 9...

If you're a grandparent who helps with care giving tasks like washing your grandchild's hair, we might add a tactile marker—such as a rubber band around the shampoo bottle—to help distinguish it from the conditioner by touch.

If you're a snowbird and live in two places, we'll talk about how to make both homes safe and functional. If you live with family—or pets—we'll think through how to navigate shared spaces, reduce clutter, and manage common tripping hazards (like pet toys!). More people can mean more movement and unpredictability, but also more support—and we'll work with all of that.

That's what OT at Spectrios is all about: meeting you where you are and helping you live fully with the vision you have. And it's not just OT. This personalized, whole-person approach is at the heart of everything we do at Spectrios. Whether you're working with our doctors, assistive technology specialists, or support team, we take the time to understand you so we can tailor our recommendations in meaningful ways.

Thank you for letting me share a little about what I do. I'd be truly honored to be part of your care team, and I look forward to working together to ensure vision loss doesn't limit what's possible for your life.

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 Memory of:

Annie Babbini

Leslie Mayland

Joan Borrelli

Carol Gail

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Dr. R. Tracy Williams

Martha J. Johnson

A Night to Remember: Our Emerald City Gala

Thank you to everyone who celebrated our 20th Annual Gala in the Emerald City. Your generosity raised critical funds to support children and adults with low vision, helping them gain independence, confidence, and access to care—no matter their financial situation. From green ties to full Wizard of Oz costumes, your energy and compassion made it a night to remember!

Congratulations to our 2025 honorees:

- Kirk Packo, MD (Posthumous) – Dr. Eleanor Faye Award
- Charlie Smith – Partner with Vision Award
- Debbie Gregorash – Clarence Troyer Volunteer of the Year Award

We were also moved by heartfelt stories shared by:

- Dr. Olya Zahrebelny
- Olivia “Pan” Ablá, a "Seeing is Believing" student

Thank you to our generous sponsors:

Golden Heart Sponsors – Wheaton Lions Club, Dunham Foundation
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The Last Word: The Test of Time

I believe the greatest gift we're given is the gift of life. Also worth noting—the number one cause of death is being born!

The clock of life begins and keeps on ticking. It moves us forward—through growth, challenges, and change. No one knows what life will bring, but whatever it does bring, it will shape us and reveal what we stand for. We take part by making choices—all in good time.

Challenges come, and one of them may be vision loss. With vision loss, can we still live our best life?? How do you choose to use your time—your most precious Gift—despite the pain vision loss can bring???

Sadness and sorrow remind us we're human—sometimes helpless, frustrated, or depressed. But overcoming them helps us cherish joy, laughter, and the promise of tomorrow. We must have Hope. We must have Faith. And we must try our best—to be our best.

My dog Bootsee, a 15-year-old cocker spaniel, is deaf, blind in one eye, and lives with tumors, arthritis, and GI issues. Yet her appetite is strong—and so is her will to live and love everyone she meets. Her tail never stops wagging. She naps often but wakes up with purpose, ready to keep going. Her time grows short. But she's always loyal, intelligent, and—of course—never talks back.

While serving jury duty, a lawyer asked if I had a bumper sticker. I said no—but offered the sticker I was looking for. "I strive to be the man my dog thinks I am."

Stories like Bootsee's remind us why this work matters—it's about compassion, resilience, and the greater good. Spectrios has cared deeply for nearly 40 years. Next year marks our 40th Anniversary—a milestone of mission, heart, and hope.

And before the clock strikes 40, we celebrate 30. Join us at our 30th Annual Golf Classic. Please support us—and help keep us on the clock for you and those you love with vision loss.

Much love to you, to Bootsee, and to all your pets!!!





39 years of serving people with vision loss!

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www.spectrios.org



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SUPPORT GROUPS



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

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