

SUMMER 2013

LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND
OF FORT WORTH

817-332-3341
www.lighthousefw.org



INSIGHT

"CHANGE ON THE HORIZON: EMPOWERMENT"

Rehabilitation Services at the Lighthouse has gained a new momentum over the past few months, and is growing with new opportunities for the community to utilize. For many years Rehabilitation Services has been known for loaning out CCTVs to those in need, assisting with enrollment in the Texas State Library Talking Book Program, providing orientation and mobility training, and helping with social security paperwork. However, with the recent hire of Leslie Ware, Rehabilitation Services is undergoing new changes and additions with the theme of empowerment.

"Blindness or limited sight should not be a person's defining characteristic, but rather it is simply one thing about that person. We strive to empower rather than enable."

Blindness rehabilitation is a discipline which involves teaching life-changing skills to those who have low vision or are blind. "Blindness rehabilitation is all about helping people live independently through skills training and employment. It's also about helping blind people lead full and productive lives," Leslie said. One of these key pieces is vocational rehabilitation, which plays a role when individuals are searching for employment. It is important for Rehabilitation Services to demonstrate and encourage the mindset that blind individuals are capable of the same things as their sighted peers. "Blindness or limited sight should not be a person's defining characteristic, but rather it is simply one thing about that person. We strive to empower rather than enable. Through blindness rehabilitation people can be empowered, and they can live independent lives, work, or be involved in their communities in whatever ways they choose," she said.

Assistive technology is a new focus for the department with the hire of Assistive Technology Specialist, Cecilia Nava. She brings over a decade of strong experience and knowledge of assistive and adaptive technology. Cecilia will be responsible for education through computers, assistive software, hardware, and equipment such as video magnifiers, screen magnifiers, screen readers, optical character recognition/scanner applications, speech input, note takers, and other areas of assistive technologies. Cecilia is also teaching keyboarding classes to assist individuals with typing speed and skills and recently directed iPad training for Camp Lighthouse @ the Y.

"Assistive technology is one of the most important aspects of blindness rehabilitation, and having assistive technology iPad training available, evaluations on site, and a computer lab



Left to right: Landon Graham, Angela Johnson, Josie Gordon, Leslie Ware, and Cecelia Nava from Rehabilitation Services.

continued inside —

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Platt Allen, III – *President/CEO*

— Rehabilitation Services continued from front page

to teach these vital skills is paramount to any blindness rehabilitation department's success," Leslie said.

A variety of services have been introduced to the Lighthouse to expand on the social side of rehabilitation skill development such as beginner Braille classes, blindness support groups, video descriptive movie nights, tactile art classes, bingo nights, and a book club. Rehabilitation Services will be offering these new social and educational outlets at no cost. Rehabilitation

Services serves our own employees onsite as well as those outside the walls of the Lighthouse.

**The future
for Services
Rehabilitation at
the Lighthouse
looks bright, and
is brimming with
opportunities
to expand in the
size and scope
of services.**

Activities that cater to all ages such as Camp Lighthouse @ the Y and Lighthouse Day at the Fort Worth Rodeo and Stock Show will continue with support of Rehabilitation Services. This is also the first year to officially introduce, "Project Believe", an adaption and expansion of the previous summer work transition program for teens. Project Believe

allows several chosen area teens who are blind to work at the Lighthouse for six weeks during the summer with the addition of a daily educational component emphasizing various useful skills for their future such as setting goals, job interviewing skills, money and budget management, as well as adjustments to blindness.

"Lighthouse is recognized as a main resource serving the greater Fort Worth community," Leslie said. "Our goal is to partner with eye medical professionals, other community resources, and other blindness experts in the area to increase the number of people Lighthouse reaches. We definitely want to be able to serve people based on their particular individual needs."

The future for Rehabilitation Services at the Lighthouse looks bright and is brimming with opportunities to expand in the size and scope of services. Leslie plans to increase the rehabilitation services provided and to soon have multiple rehabilitation activities occurring simultaneously on a daily basis at the Lighthouse. "We want to reach all age groups and serve more people, but at the same time complement resources that are already in the community rather than duplicate them," she said. The long-term plan to expand the department for more extensive capabilities to serve the community and employees may involve a low vision store, additional staff members, and more physical space. One thing is for sure, the past three months are off to a great start and Lighthouse can look forward to more positive changes.

Be on the lookout for new upcoming events and programs, and do not hesitate to contact Leslie Ware if you are interested in volunteering or anything related to Blindness Rehabilitation.



Three local volunteers were elected to serve on the Lighthouse's Board of Directors.

They are **Dennis Singleton**, District 7 Fort Worth City Councilman and Associate Dean at UNTHS, **Dana Compton**, Director of Business Development at Komatsu Architecture, and **Melanie Lara**, Controller, Downtown Fort Worth, Inc.

MICHAEL HINGSON'S VISIT TO FORT WORTH

"Don't let your sight get in the way of your vision." These are the words that #1 New York Times bestselling author and World Trade Center survivor **Michael Hingson** often shared when he visited the Fort Worth area in late February.



Michael, who has been blind since birth, is an internationally renowned public speaker and bestselling author of *Thunder Dog: The True Story of a Blind Man, His Guide Dog and the Triumph of Trust at Ground Zero*. Michael is the founder of the "Michael Hingson Group, Inc." which provides consultant services to organizations concerning Inclusion and Diversity towards persons with disabilities, and "Roselle's Dream Foundation", which provides assistive technologies to blind children and adults. Michael holds a master's degree in physics from the University of California at Irvine, is a lifetime member of the physics honor society, Sigma Pi Sigma, and has been a successful business manager and entrepreneur over his 40-year career.

Michael shared his message with over 3,500 youth and adults in 22 personal appearances during his week-long visit. Michael serves as an excellent role model and advocate for individuals who are blind, but even more significant was his message on inclusion, team work, trust, and faith that resonated with all audiences.

The Lighthouse wanted to ensure that Michael had a memorable visit and thanks to TCU intern Molly Johnson, Michael had the opportunity to visit Billy Bob's and the stockyard for some delicious barbeque and dinner at Colonial Country Club with Lighthouse President/CEO Platt Allen. He took a little bit of Texas back to California in the way of a pair of Justin Boots sporting the TCU logo.

We look forward to having Michael back in the area in the near future as a result of his recent election to the Lighthouse board of directors. His affiliation with the Lighthouse in this way is a key addition because of his strong advocacy for the agency and the blind community. Platt Allen, III commented, "Who better to tell our story and share our life-changing mission than Michael? He lives it everyday."



P.A.L.S.

Partners Assisting with Lighthouse Services

A NEW VOLUNTEER PROGRAM FOR THE LIGHTHOUSE

The Lighthouse has initiated a new volunteer program entitled "P.A.L.S.", which stands for Partners Assisting with Lighthouse Services.

Over the years, individuals have contacted the nonprofit wanting to volunteer and be more involved within the blind community. This formal program will provide trained and supervised volunteers to assist individuals who are blind in activities such as reading mail, transportation, shopping, and technology. Volunteers will also be utilized in organizing and hosting tactile art classes, bingo nights, and other fun activities.

To learn more about the application and training process and to become a part of the **P.A.L.S. PROGRAM**, CALL 817-332-3341 and speak with Nancy Fisher.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



To many of you I am sure that I sound like a broken record, repeating the same phrase over and over, but I'll say it again...things continue to change here at the Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth. As I review my prior articles I see that I have talked about our industrial operations, board of directors, and community development. In this article, I will focus on what we are doing to benefit the broader population of people who are blind in Tarrant and surrounding counties.

Several months ago, Leslie Ware joined our team as the head of Rehabilitation Services. Leslie comes to us with many years of service in the disability area with the State of Texas. Adding her to our team was the first step in committing to change the lives of people who are blind.

While the Lighthouse has effectively provided job opportunities over the past 78 years, we have not been as successful in serving the needs of the broader blind population, until now. Recently we hosted our first free Braille 101 class. The second is already underway. We hosted a descriptive movie night where "Puss in Boots" was shown along with descriptive narrative heard through the use of earbuds to describe the non-dialogue elements of the show. We hosted a support group for those coping with the effects of macular degeneration. We hosted Project Believe, a

cooperative effort between DARS/DBS and the Lighthouse to provide summer employment opportunities and education to blind youth. We also hosted our second annual Camp Lighthouse @ the Y for children who are blind to learn about adaptive technology – specifically the Apple iPad. A keyboarding class is on the horizon along with other support groups, art classes, and descriptive narrative productions.

Our mission is to serve. Our objective is to change lives. Our task is to make a difference in every life we touch. You can be a part of this excitement by volunteering with the Lighthouse. Contact Nancy Fisher at 817-332-3341 or nfisher@lighthousefw.org to learn more.

My commitment to the community and our organization is to continue to stretch our organization to be more creative and innovative in identifying ways to generate jobs and provide services. Together we can and will make Fort Worth and Tarrant County a better place for all of us to live, work and play.

Yours in service,
Platt Allen, III
President/CEO

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

JAMES SHELBY was recognized as the Peter J. Salmon Employee of the Year for the Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth at the Annual Dinner in January. James, an inspiring employee since 1998, has supported himself since he was 16 years old when he first moved to Dallas. His first positions were in the glass industry, but within two to three years he began working in warehouses pulling stock. Shortly following this transition into his new job, his supervisors began to notice mistakes and suggested that he have his vision checked. Upon his visit to the doctor's office James first heard the mention of his failing vision when he overheard his doctor say to a nurse, "This man is legally blind." This statement was shocking to James, who was later diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa. James continued to work at the warehouse for a while, but eventually was forced to transition elsewhere and had to give up driving.

A counselor from the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), Scott Hudson, mentioned that he should seek out information from the Lighthouse for the Blind regarding employment opportunities for visually impaired and blind individuals. James soon began work at the Lighthouse in the Sub-Contract Department, however when his potential and ability were recognized through an evaluation, he was transferred to the Box Department where he works today as a Master Stitcher Machine Operator. This position requires precision, accuracy and timing.

"James has the most positive attitude toward work and his co-workers. He is always willing to do what is necessary to accomplish the task at hand no matter the circumstances."

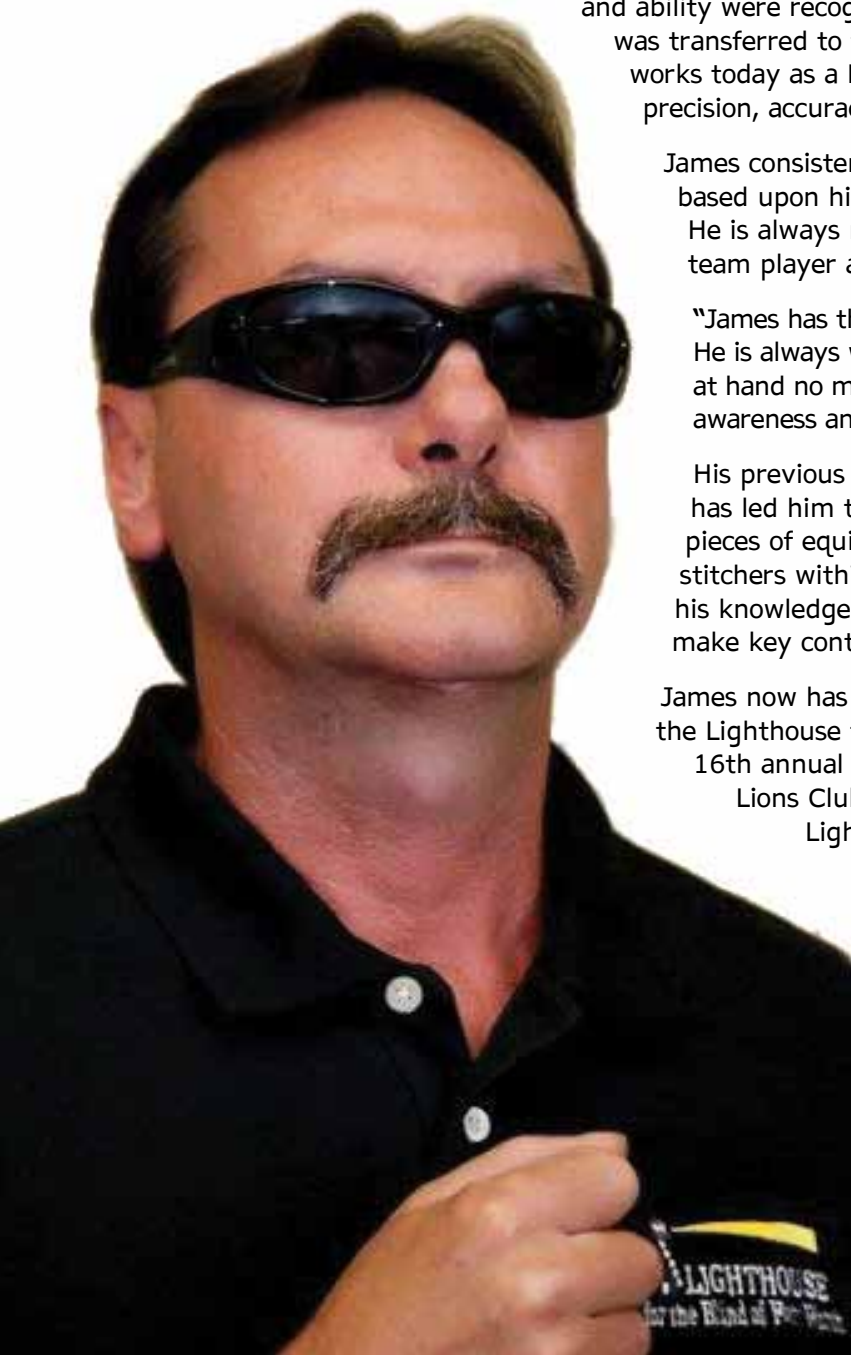
James consistently takes great pride in his work; this is quite obvious based upon his punctuality and that he rarely misses a day of work. He is always neat and appropriate in his appearance, and is a true team player and an asset for any production line.

"James has the most positive attitude toward work and his co-workers. He is always willing to do what is necessary to accomplish the task at hand no matter the circumstances. He demonstrates true quality awareness and assurance," comments supervisor Danny Watkins.

His previous background and experience in small engine repair, has led him to take the opportunity to learn operations of several pieces of equipment such as the clicker press, roller press, and all stitchers within the Box Department. He is committed to enhancing his knowledge and technical skills which will allow him to continue to make key contributions at the Lighthouse.

James now has had the opportunity to become a prominent "face" at the Lighthouse through his participation in events such as the recent 16th annual "xSIGHTment" 5K Run hosted by the Colleyville Lions Club. He is a strong advocate and representative of the Lighthouse and its mission throughout the community. As the Employee of the Year, he and his wife will travel to National Harbor, Maryland to be recognized during the 2013 National Industries for the Blind Conference and Expo along with other honorees from around the country.

"I am excited to be going. It will be my first time on a plane and we have some tours planned for us up there. We can't wait to get there," James said.



From Mops and Boxes to Machine Parts: LIGHTHOUSE Acquires A Vibrant Machine Shop

When the doors first opened, it was the production of mops, brooms and other household items by Lighthouse for the Blind employees that provided the revenue stream; in the mid-seventies, light manufacturing began in the way of paper products, shipping containers, and military supplies bringing about a significant change in attitude as to the abilities and skills of individuals of workers who are blind. Now, in 2013, another transitional time in the history of the Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth has arrived with the recent acquisition of the machine shop operation. The Lighthouse took over management on May 1. This new transition into an existing facility will bring employment opportunities for qualifying Lighthouse employees.

Tommy Jaynes, Vice President of Industrial Operations, initially proposed the idea to add a machine shop to the Lighthouse after noticing an emerging trend from a few other Lighthouse agencies across the nation. The Lighthouse for the Blind in Seattle specifically drew Tommy's interest based upon the strength of their current machine shop which has been in operation for about 60 years.

"This really is unique and non-traditional for agencies like ours and it is a great revenue diversification tool for the Lighthouse," Platt Allen, III, President/CEO said. "The machine shop creates opportunity for the population to work in positions equally as competitive for sighted workers that are highly sought after, and well-paid."



The newly acquired machine shop will continue to employ the current sighted workers, and will gradually transition blind employees into the shop as equipment adaptations are completed and as tenured Lighthouse employees prove themselves capable and compatible for the mechanical machinery. "We have no intention of displacing the current employees, but as natural attrition occurs we hope to have blind workers trained and ready to go as needed," Platt said. "If the opportunity does not arise right away, they may be able to take positions in other machine shops in town with the training received on the 'training grounds' of the new machine shop."

Jon Edson, the nephew of the previous owner, has over 30 years of experience in the industry, and 20 years with this particular machine shop. Jon has shown an excitement about continuing in the business and helping in the transition for the future.

Some aspects of the machine shop will require a few blind friendly adjustments such as safer walkways and better lighting, as well as adaptive technology that can be added to the machinery and tools. The first few blind workers selected to go into this training process need to have stronger sight that is more conducive to the lack of the latest blind friendly technology.

"The ultimate goal is to train people in our facility to become proficient machine operators that will be capable of working in a commercial environment," Tommy explained.

The Lighthouse is currently seeking to expand this business and has confident intentions for the future for this new addition. "This is an opportunity for employees to work in a new field that is typically non-blind, and it will prepare them to take on positions and challenges outside the Lighthouse," Platt said.



TARGETS

The Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth is a supplier of B-27 style shooting targets to many customers in Texas. These targets are purchased and used by state agencies like the Texas Department of Public Safety, CHL (Concealed Handgun Licensing) Instructors, Police Departments, security companies, and organizations conducting emergency training courses. This product in particular has been a popular item within the past year for sales particularly to CHL instructors. The Lighthouse location allows for a lower shipping rate in Texas compared to average rates if customers bought from a different national supplier, and the agency can also cater to small quantity orders. Overall, the sales of targets through the Lighthouse can be less complex and usually saves on processing time versus other suppliers. The targets are packaged in-house by the employees of the Lighthouse.



There are two versions of B-27 style targets. The cardboard shooting target is 24" x 45" with a green, full size silhouette. This style of target works well at outdoor shooting ranges. These are sold for \$0.84 each in multiples of 25. A green center repair patch is available for the cardboard targets. These are sold for \$0.15 each in multiples of 50. The paper shooting target is also 24" x 45" with a green, full size silhouette. This style of target works well at indoor shooting ranges and is an excellent low cost option. These are sold for \$0.47 each in boxes of 100. For more information or to place an order, email sales@lighthousefw.org or **CALL 817-332-3341.**

NEW FACES AT THE LIGHTHOUSE

Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth is pleased to welcome three new staff members.

Leslie Ware has been hired to oversee the expansion and day-to-day operations of Rehabilitation Services. Ware, a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor with a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling from Texas Tech University, worked for the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services for over 12 years and most recently was a Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor within the Division for Blind Services. Ware is moving forward with Braille instruction classes, expanded technology training, and in collaboration with Community Development, beginning PALS (Partners Assisting with Lighthouse Services) volunteer program.



In addition to the hire of Ware, an Assistive Technology Specialist, **Cecelia Nava**, was brought on to provide assistive technology consultations and training to blind and low vision consumers of all ages. Nava joins us from Austin, Texas and has over 15 years of experience in vocational rehabilitation and assistive technology with the blind and visually impaired. She most recently served as the Assistive Technology Specialist at the Division for Blind Services. In her first month, Nava instructed iPad training for the visually impaired campers at the week-long Camp Lighthouse @ the Y.



Andrea Hein, a recent graduate of Texas Christian University, has also come on board to serve as the External Communication Coordinator. Hein has a Bachelor of Science degree in both Advertising/PR and Speech-Language Pathology and most recently was crowned Ms. TCU in the fall of 2012. Hein will oversee all social media, external relations and the production of marketing materials for the Lighthouse.



It Isn't Just About Employment at the LIGHTHOUSE

Bingo, movie night, beep baseball, symphony and theater are some of the fun things going on at the Lighthouse! It just isn't about employment around here; it is about a fulfilling and fun life for our employees, their families and others within the blind community.

We take a great deal of pride in the fact that Lighthouse is the largest Tarrant County employer of working-aged adults who are blind, but we are also proud of the other resources and opportunities that we make available. In the last several months, the Lighthouse staff has been able to share our mission with many new friends through a variety of venues.

Through the continued generosity of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, music lovers enjoyed several concerts and summer wouldn't be the same without an outing to watch the Texas Rangers. We greatly appreciate these continued community partnerships.

Lighthouse Rehab hosted the first Movie Night in early June. Guests enjoyed the movie *Puss in Boots* with descriptive narration, and of course freshly made popcorn resulted in a relaxing evening.



An exciting endeavor with Kids Who Care, Inc. Musical Theater (www.kidswhocare.org) made it possible for blind patrons, young and old, to visit Never Neverland while watching and listening to the magical performance of Peter Pan. Using headphones, Lighthouse guests heard descriptive narration by certified VI teacher Debbie Coschere.

Those awesome TCU Delta Gammas threw a Bingo/Pizza party in late spring. A roomful of guests not only enjoyed the delicious food and the delightful camaraderie, but several lucky folks took home prizes.



The Lighthouse was honored to once again be selected by Alcon employees to be the benefactor of their annual Community Partnership Day. Headed up by Jon Niemczyk, 12 members of the Integrity and Compliance Team spent the day learning and working with the Lighthouse employees. A great time was had by all.

It seems only natural that given the Lighthouse's past history with the game of beep baseball that there is a desire to bring back the



game in the way of a new recreational team. Don't be surprised if you drive by and see a game happening on the back lot. The annual 4th of July celebration was kicked off with a rousing game and the Camp Lighthouse campers also had a chance to experience the sound of a beeping ball and bases. If you are interested in being on a beep baseball team or helping as a volunteer, please call our office.

Other activities on the Lighthouse's calendar include tactile art classes, book reviews, support groups, and White Cane Day. Be sure and like us at **www.facebook.com/lighthousefw** so that you can join us.

BEACONS OF HOPE

GIFTS RECEIVED BETWEEN NOVEMBER 1, 2012 – JUNE 30, 2013

Because of the kind gesture of the following, Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth is proudly providing jobs, services and independence.

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Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth strives to accurately reflect all of those who generously support our mission. If an error has occurred, please accept our sincerest apologies and let us know of our mistake by contacting us at 817-332-3341, ext. 7782.

That Simple Dash –

In July 2012, the Lighthouse was notified by a local attorney that our agency had been named as a beneficiary in a will. What wonderful news to receive. The letter was filed away until a follow-up phone call was made in late December. The estate was in the middle of probate. Several months later, a second letter was received providing an update: income taxes were being filed and a refund was expected, so there was an additional delay. Eleven months later, a Federal Express envelope arrived containing a check and a letter stating that the estate had been settled.

The name of the deceased was unfamiliar leaving us to speculate as to how the Lighthouse came to be selected as one of two beneficiaries. Who or what had touched this individual to the extent that she wanted her final act to be one that would impact the lives of individuals who are blind? Perhaps she herself had experienced sight impairment or had a parent who received services from the Lighthouse. Perhaps she had only heard about the Lighthouse's life-changing mission through a newsletter or a brochure but viewed it as a worthwhile organization deserving of support or maybe the attorney who assisted her in drafting the will championed the Lighthouse as a solid, long-time established local nonprofit.

The generous act brought to mind that infamous poem written in 1996 by Linda Ellis, called "The Dash." The theme of the poem is that "the dash" between the birth year and the year of one's death on a tombstone, from beginning to end, is really what matters the most in one's life. We would venture to guess that our benefactor's "dash" represented a generous and loving spirit that continues to live on in part through the actions of the Lighthouse. No doubt she was a caring person who wanted to make a difference even after she died. For that the Lighthouse is truly grateful.

We hope that as you ponder your "dash", you will also think about the Lighthouse for the Blind. Please consider making a gift for general operations or a legacy gift to our Endowment. If the timing is not right, then please remember the Lighthouse in your will. A will is such a simple way to demonstrate your caring and loving spirit for those individuals and charitable causes that mean so much to you. Learn more about Planned Giving on the Lighthouse's website and contact your attorney. Please feel free to contact Nancy Fisher at 817-332-3341 for more information. Donations are tax-deductible and credit cards are accepted. Your gift today and your gift in the future ensure that the Lighthouse for the Blind will continue to be a life-changing force for youth and adults who are blind.

**AND FOR THAT,
WE ARE ALSO
TRULY GRATEFUL.**



www.lighthousefw.org



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