



The Beacon

May 2010

The Lighthouse Comes Through—Barbara’s Story

“My eyes were protruding,” said Barbara. “The doctors told me that I would go blind without surgery to scrape the bones around my eyes. My job did not provide insurance and there was no way I could afford surgery. I was scared to death because I live alone and, as the youngest member of my family, I had no idea who would care for me if I went blind. Every time I did the simplest daily activity, I wondered how in the world I’d be able to do it blind. But I kept working, even though I had to read customer’s driver’s licenses and enter the numbers into a computer. It was very difficult. And frightening, because my vision was rapidly getting worse and I didn’t know how much longer I’d be able to work. I kept researching possible help online and discovered the Lions. The Loganville Lions Club sponsored me and referred me to the Lions Lighthouse.”

Barbara’s eye protrusions were caused by another condition and the medications required to control it. The Lighthouse provided sight-saving surgery, then Barbara developed a related eye condition that required yet another surgery.

“Because of stretched eye muscles, I developed strabismus. Everything looked like trying to watch a rolling television, where half the image is on top of a line and the other half, beneath it. It was almost impossible to enter numbers in a computer. But my employers were very understanding and knew I was doing the absolute best I could. One time I was mowing my lawn and a friend asked me, ‘Do you realize you mowed the same row five times?’ I couldn’t tell which row I saw was the actual row. I also couldn’t drive—I would be able to see fine and then suddenly the road would distort. Again, doctors told me I would lose my eyesight without surgery. And again, I reached out to the Lighthouse.

“It’s amazing that there really are people out there who want to help, I’ve always been very independent, until I couldn’t take care of myself to prevent blindness. It was hard, but twice I had to ask good people to help me get sight-saving surgery. And twice, the Lighthouse came through.”

Service Numbers Update

From July 1—March 31:

729 Georgians received **1336** hearing aids through the Lighthouse’s digital hearing aid program.

1,482 people had their eyes tested at a Lighthouse vision clinic, a 27 percent increase over last year.

2475 Georgians received a pair of glasses at Lighthouse clinics and optical shops, a 33 percent increase over last year.

211 sight saving surgeries were performed, and **7** people received a lens to correct keratoconus or a prosthetic eye.



Volunteer Opportunities—Saturday, May 22nd

North Georgia—Mountain City Warrior Dash



We are looking for 25 volunteers to work at the Warrior Dash in Mountain City (about 2 hours north of Atlanta) on Saturday, May 22nd. The shift is from 8:00am—2:00 pm.

Location:

Blue Ridge Camp & Resort
355 Playhouse Dr.
Mountain City, GA 30562

What you get for volunteering:

If we can get 25 people to the event, Warrior Dash will donate \$1,000 to the Lighthouse. Each volunteer also receives a Warrior Dash t-shirt, and a helmet like the one pictured. If you are a member of a Lions club, we will credit your club with the appropriate proportion of the \$1,000 (e.g., if

you bring 10 of the 25 people, your club will be credited with \$400).

What is expected from the volunteers:

All volunteers must be over 18 years old. Volunteers will devote full-time attention and energies to Warrior Dash and during the agreed time slot, will not engage in any other activity. Warrior Dash is an extreme event bringing along an intense work environment. Your duties, along with the event staff's, involve maintaining a safe atmosphere for all participants, spectators, etc. Duties may include packet pick up, answering participant questions, managing parking, overseeing obstacles, taking photos, etc. The event will go on rain or shine.

If you would like to help the Lighthouse by volunteering at the Warrior Dash, please contact Kim at 404-325-3620 or at kfletcher@lionslighthouse.org with your name, e-mail address, and phone number. Thank you!

Metro Atlanta—Special Olympics Opening Eyes Vision Screening

We need volunteer ODs and other staff and family members to help with the Special Olympics Opening Eyes vision screening at Emory University on Saturday, May 22nd from 9 am - 3:30 pm at the Woodruff PE Building at Emory University.

The Opening Eyes program is co-sponsored by Special Olympics International and Lions Clubs International Foundation and provides eye examinations and prescription eyeglasses to Special Olympians worldwide. Last year, over 200 Special Olympics athletes participated in the screenings at Emory and in Savannah. This year, over 1,600 athletes are expected at the Summer Games at Emory competing in 8 events. The Healthy Athletes program will feature the Opening Eyes vision program and Special Smiles dental program for athletes at the Games.



We need at least 10 volunteer ODs and 20-30 additional volunteers to help out with the screening on May 22. Please let me know if you can help out for a half or full day or call if you have questions about the program.

Krystal P. Bragg, OD
Clinical Director, Special Olympics Georgia Opening Eyes
Ph: 912-489-3606
Fax: 912-489-1513

“Coping? How Can I Cope When I Can’t Hear?”

TV too loud? Can’t hear what your child is saying to you? Stay away from parties because you can’t understand people? Sound familiar? All that and much much more is reality for over 31 million Americans (that’s one in ten!) with a hearing loss. It’s the unseen disability. We can’t ‘see’ hearing loss until someone says, “Huh?”

Next time you encounter a hard of hearing person (beware, though, for we’re everywhere!), remember: we have to work hard to hear you. Please help us cope and hear you better by projecting your communication. It’s simple, too.

Some helpful tips:

- Don’t shout. (Shouting usually distorts the sound and makes it more difficult for us to hear.)
- Speak clearly and at a moderate pace. (We’re hard of hearing, not stupid--or whatever politically correct word you want to use here)
- Don’t hide your mouth, chew food, gum, or smoke while talking. (We’re reading your lips!)
- Re-phrase if you’re not understood. (Often we’ve heard only part of what you’ve said; if you’ll simply say the same idea in a different way, we’ll catch it and put it all together.)
- Use facial expressions and gestures. (We love reading faces just like hearing folks do!)
- Give clues when changing the subject. (A simple pause can be effective. Perhaps change your posture. Use gestures. Speak slowly and look us in the eye when you talk to us.)
- Avoid noisy backgrounds. (Large rooms with people talking everywhere makes hearing very difficult for most people. It’s often nearly impossible for us hard of hearing folks.)
- Be patient if our responses seem slow or out of context. (We appreciate you taking the time and the energy to help us hear. We value what you have to say and we want to hear it!)
- Please don’t say, “Oh, never mind. It wasn’t important,” if we don’t hear you. It IS important and we want to hear what you say. It’s vital to us as individuals.

These skills are basic, but are so often underutilized in our rapidly communicating society.

Jeff Bonnell is the president of the Atlanta Buckhead chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America, a non-profit organization advocating for people with hearing loss through education on technology and communication help in dealing with hearing loss and eradicating the stigma associated with it. Please see www.hearingloss.org for additional information on HLAA – “the nation’s voice for people with hearing loss...”

May is Better Hearing Month!

Even when people have insurance, hearing aids are often considered “cosmetic” and are not covered. At \$1,500 to \$5,000, they are out of reach for most low-income and many middle-income families. The Lighthouse and the Georgia Public Service Commission partner to make these essential devices accessible to all Georgians. We are currently the only provider of low-cost hearing aids in the state.

Hearing aids truly change lives. Seventy percent of our employed hearing clients say their aids helped them keep their job. Almost 90 percent believe the hearing aids helped them perform better on the job. One of our clients, George McElrath, often relays his story of looking for employment and being unable to hear. He sat in a room with an interviewer, and couldn’t understand the questions the man was asking him. As frightening as interviewing can be, no one should have to endure it with a limiting condition that can be treated so easily.



If you or someone you know has a hearing disability but is unable to afford hearing aids, please contact the Lighthouse. If you can help us ensure that we do not have to turn anyone away for lack of funding, please contact the Lighthouse at 404-325-3630, or donate online at www.lionslighthouse.org.

The Lions' Den

Award Deadline Extended to Today!

The deadline for award submissions is today, May 7th. Please either call the Lighthouse or Sarah an e-mail at septing@lionslighthouse.org to apply. The following awards require applications:

Lighthouse Leo of the Year, 100% Associate Director Award, The Hearing award, the Ken Massingale Award, The Best Lighthouse Project Award, The Lighthouse Publicity Award, and The Best New Leo Project Award. To learn more about these awards, please visit www.lionslighthouse.org/lions/awards.



Ask the Lighthouse

What happens if we can't mail our donations in time for the awards?

If you know how much your club is going to donate, you can call Kim at 404-325-3630 with your pledge. As long as we receive the check by May 20th, your donation will be counted in this year's awards.

Any checks submitted after the deadline will count toward next year's White Cane total. There is no need to hold onto them until next fiscal year to ensure that they are counted for next year's recognition purposes.

White Cane Needs Your Support!!

As of May 5th, White Cane is at \$85,000. It's a good start, but is just over half-way to our \$167,500 goal. So far only two clubs have received Wal-Mart grants, and Wal-Mart is a great supporter of White Cane—if we ask. The last thing we want to do is turn away surgery applicants due to lack of funding, so please support your club's White Cane efforts! If you need anything from the Lighthouse, please don't hesitate to contact Kim at 404-325-3630. Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who made Night of Spectacles a Success!!

The third annual Night of Spectacles was a great success! The event raised over \$105,000 for our vision and hearing programs. There were a record 17 dresses in the design competition, with students from Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), Brenau University, and Georgia Southern University. Congratulations to SCAD students Mariana Gutierrez and Rebecca Fahrner for winning the competition and a \$1,000 scholarship!



The winning design

The auctions also went very well, with items including an incredible wooden table hand-crafted by Lion John Rudert, a two-night stay at the Ritz-Carlton on Lake Oconee, a number of date nights in Atlanta, and LASIK surgery from some of the best doctors in the Southeast. Two week-long vacation packages, a catered dinner for 12 at Glenridge Hall, and a beautiful diamond bracelet were also available at our live auction. Many thanks to everyone who donated to the auctions!



Event chairs Meryl and Paul Kaufman, MD