



## WEIGEL WILLIAMSON CENTER FOR VISUAL REHABILITATION

# Visionary

Making a difference through your generosity

WINTER 2010/  
SPRING 2011

## LOW VISION SUCCESS STORY

Lisa Spellman, Publications/Media Specialist, UNMC Public Relations

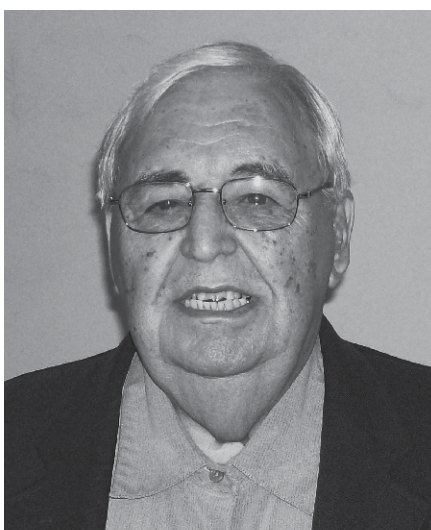
Imagine waking up Christmas morning and realizing you can't see as well as the day before.

In fact, all you can really see are shapes and colors. Gone is the ability to read the newspaper, write letters or even watch T.V.

That's exactly what happened to the Rev. Richard Skelley on Christmas Day 2009.

The 82-year-old had been battling macular degeneration for the previous three years. He had lost the center vision in his left eye, but was still able to drive, read and write until that fateful day.

"That night when I went to bed I had a long



Rev. Richard Skelley

talk with God," said the retired Presbyterian minister.

Skelley said he pounded on the doors of heaven and asked, "Why me? I've been a good pastor."

After stabilizing the bleeding in his right eye and declaring him legally blind, Skelley's ophthalmologist referred him to the Weigel Williamson Center for Visual Rehabilitation.

There, he learned how to utilize his remaining vision and found support from people who, like himself, learned to navigate life despite their vision loss.

In working with occupational therapist Evy Katz,

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## Volunteers Make a Positive Impact

"Welcome to the Weigel Williamson Center." When you visit the Center, chances are the first person you will meet will be a volunteer, greeting you at the front desk. The staff at the Weigel Williamson Center is very grateful for the help of their volunteers, who range in age from 17 to 84. There were four volunteers when the Center opened in 2008. That number has now grown to eleven. Some volunteers help answer the phone. Some put together client charts. Some schedule appointments. Some help sell store products. Some conduct client interviews. All make a positive impact!



A tea was held to honor the volunteers at the Weigel Williamson Center.

# Dear Friends,

It has been another exciting year of growth and development at the Weigel Williamson Center.

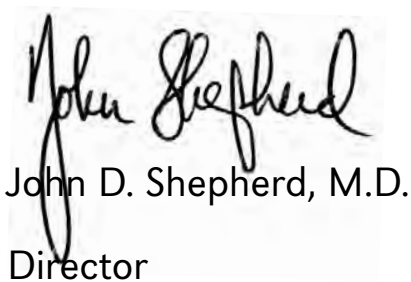
We have started providing low vision rehabilitation services for pediatric clients, helping to identify adaptive equipment that enables them to maximize their success in educational endeavors.

Thanks to support from the Lions (see separate article), we are developing services to assist clients in getting transportation to and from the Center.

We will soon be purchasing a driving simulator system as a result of funding from the Rotary Club of Omaha. The system will allow our occupational therapist to assess driving skills of our low vision clients.

The opportunity remains to support the work of the Center through the Dinsdale Endowment Fund. Such funding assists us in our efforts to continue to provide the time-intensive, in-depth clinical services necessary to meet the needs of those who are struggling with visual impairment.

We appreciate your interest and support,

  
John D. Shepherd, M.D.  
Director



## HOW TO MAKE A GIFT

To make a donation to the endowment fund of the Weigel Williamson Center, contact Karen Levin at the University of Nebraska Foundation (402) 502-4921, or [klevin@unfoundation.org](mailto:klevin@unfoundation.org). Gifts may also be made at [www.unmc.edu/lowvision](http://www.unmc.edu/lowvision).

## LOW VISION SUCCESS STORY Continued from Page 1

Skelley learned to better utilize the remaining peripheral vision in his eyes. Katz also showed him how to use a CCTV, a machine that can magnify text, pictures and graphics up to 75 times.

With the help of a CCTV at home, Skelley is able to enjoy the newspaper again. But, he said, it is the monthly support group at the Weigel Williamson Center that has pulled him through.

"I'd sit and listen to other people and think, I've only dealt with this for a few months. Some of these people have had to deal with this for years and they are living full active lives," Skelley said.

The support group has given him hope, purpose and peace, he said.

With the help of a liturgist, Skelley continues to preach when called upon, as well as conduct funerals and weddings. He conducts services twice a month at a nursing home in Papillion, and he and his wife have even joined a singing group, the Papillion Singing Seniors.

"I'm finding there are more things I can do than not in spite of my vision loss," Skelley said.

# Sunglasses

## Don't Leave Home Without 'Em!

Don't put away your sunglasses when sunny days are in short supply. Damaging, ultraviolet (UV) rays of the sun are still plentiful. Overcast, hazy days can be just as harmful to your eyes as bright, sunny ones. UV rays can pass through clouds and damage the retina (back of the eye), as well as the cornea (clear covering on the eye), and delicate skin around the eye.

Exposure to UV rays can increase risk of developing age-related macular degeneration (AMD), cataracts, and growths on the eye, including cancer. The longer or more intense the exposure to bright light, the greater the risk.

Glare produced by sun reflecting on snow, water or other surfaces can interfere with vision, making walking or driving hazardous. Glare can be uncomfortable and fatiguing, too.

American Academy of Ophthalmology  
Tips for Purchasing Sunglasses:

- Dark color does not equal protection!
- Purchase sunglasses that absorb 97 to 100 percent of UV-A and UV-B rays.
- Choose polarized sunglasses to block horizontal glare.
- Choose wrap-around sunglasses to block sun from entering at top and sides.
- Wear sunglasses anytime you're outside.
- Never look directly at the sun.

You can find sunglasses especially for low vision needs at the Weigel Williamson Center.

## Lions Assist with Transportation Needs

The conference room at the Weigel Williamson Center is filled to capacity on the third Friday of every month, thanks to the help of members of local Lions clubs. This is the Friday that low vision clients are invited to attend a support group meeting. Many clients would be unable to attend if it weren't for Lion volunteers who drive them to and from the meeting.

In addition, the Lions are available to bring local clients to their low vision rehabilitation

appointments. Recognizing transportation as a major need for clients with low vision, the Lions will soon be extending this valuable transportation service to clients who live in communities outside of the Omaha area.

"We are very grateful for our friends, the Lions," Dr. Shepherd said. "They identify needs and continue to lend a helping hand."



## ASK DR. SHEPHERD

### Question:

Since I see my eye doctor regularly, why would I need to see another eye doctor when I come to the low vision center?

### Answer:

As the eye doctor at the Weigel Williamson Center, I have received specialized training in low vision rehabilitation. This means that I am trained to determine the style and strength of low vision devices, such as magnifiers and telescopes, that will help you use your remaining vision better. I am also able to identify the training that you will need to maximize the use of your vision. My focus is on low vision rehabilitation, helping you use your vision better, whereas your regular eye doctor focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of eye conditions.

# A Place for Renewed Hope and Help for Those with Low Vision

THE STAFF OF THE WEIGEL WILLIAMSON CENTER FOR VISUAL REHABILITATION

**John D. Shepherd, M.D.**

Director of the Weigel Williamson Center

**Frank Graf, O.D.**

Optometrist on Staff

**Patti Fries, O.D.**

Optometrist on Staff

**Evy Katz, OTR/L**

Low Vision Occupational Therapist

**Kathy VonDollen, R.N.**

Coordinator

**Pat Jones, R.N., B.A.N.**

Assistant Coordinator

The Weigel Williamson Center is a service of the UNMC Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences. It relies on the generosity of donor support in order to fulfill its mission of hope and help for those with low vision.

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## DONOR PROFILE: Glenn Dalrymple, M.D.

Dr. Glenn Dalrymple is one of the Weigel Williamson Center's strongest supporters. His enthusiasm for the Center is a result of both his satisfaction as a client and compassion as a doctor.

Dalrymple has spent his life helping others. As a radiologist, he served in the air force, worked in private practice, was a professor and faculty member at three medical universities and, even after retirement, a hospital volunteer. It was his knowledge and experience that led him to a self-diagnosis of macular degeneration in 1998.

"Being diagnosed can be a scary thing," Dalrymple says. "But one must have a very positive attitude. And if you work at it, you can counteract a lot and learn how to do things that will help allow you to see again."

That's exactly what Dalrymple does as a client at the Center. He works at seeing again through

rehabilitation, learns how to use tools to help cope with the disease and encourages other clients with his positive attitude.

Dalrymple recognizes the importance of the Center and the significance of the services it provides, which is why he shares his resources. Recently, he donated a Kindle (an electronic book) and an iPad so that the Center can demonstrate the value of such tools to low vision clients in their efforts to maximize their ability to read.

Dalrymple continues to make financial gifts to the Center, as well. Such gifts are critical to its ongoing operation and continued success in providing services to clients.

When asked why he feels so strongly about supporting the Center and its clients, Dalrymple replies with a laugh, "I'm a doctor, that's what we do."