LOW VISION SUCCESS STORY
Lisa Spellman, Publications/Media Specialist, UNMC Public Relations

Finishing a crossword puzzle, reading the paper, watching a football game, driving to the grocery store. Simple activities of daily life that most people take for granted.

But not Robert and Delores Rice, who both suffer with vision loss due to macular degeneration.

It was eight years ago when Robert, 86, was diagnosed with the disease.

“I was looking at a graph hanging on the refrigerator and noticed the lines were wavy. That’s when I called the doctor,” Robert said.

A few years later, his wife, Delores, was diagnosed. Delores also suffered vision loss from a retinal stroke in her right eye.

But it wasn’t until last July when their eye doctor told Robert he may not be able to continue driving that the couple decided to visit the Weigel Williamson Center for Visual Rehabilitation at the University of Nebraska Medical Center for help.

“That was hard to hear,” Robert said.

By then Delores was also no longer driving, nor could she see well enough to do a crossword puzzle.

The Rice’s decision to go to the Weigel Williamson Center was life changing for them.

There Robert was given a detailed vision test and told he had enough remaining vision that he could apply for a limited driver’s license through the state of Nebraska. Upon the recommendation by the low vision optometrist, the occupational therapist provided training with a bioptic telescope which Robert could opt to use for spotting detail when driving.

And Delores was introduced to Merlin.

“It’s a lifesaver for me,” Delores said of the Merlin CCTV that she uses every day. The video magnifier has given the avid crossword puzzle player back her favorite hobby.

“I love to do crosswords and now I’m able to again,” she said smiling.

“We would highly recommend anyone who is struggling with vision loss to go to the low vision center,” Robert said. “We are so glad we did.”
Dear Friends,

Welcome to another edition of our newsletter, the Visionary. I believe the word “visionary” captures the spirit of the foresight and imagination of many individuals who have been essential to the growth and development of the Weigel Williamson Center. Profiled in this edition are Pat Jones and the Lions Clubs, exemplary visionaries who have contributed significantly to the success of the Weigel Williamson Center. We wish Pat Jones the best as she moves into retirement, and we are excited to welcome Lacey Jay as our new clinic operations lead.

Thank you for following the Weigel Williamson Center through our newsletter. Our desire is to keep you connected to our mission to provide hope and help for all people with vision loss.

John D. Shepherd, M.D.,
Director

Good Bye Pat... Welcome Lacey
Lisa Spellman, Publications/Media Specialist, UNMC Public Relations

Lacey Jay knows the challenges of living life with low vision. Suffering twice from a detached retina in her left eye and from cataracts, Jay empathizes with others who’ve had to learn how to navigate the world successfully in spite of their visual impairment.

Jay brings her passion for helping others with low vision to the Weigel Williamson Center for Visual Rehabilitation. She will replace Pat Jones, who retires on April 4, as the clinic supervisor.

“It has been a blessing to work with Dr. John Shepherd and the staff,” Jones said. “Saying goodbye is bittersweet.”

For 30 years Jones has watched as the clinic grew from occupying just a few small rooms in the eye clinic to a free standing low vision house.

“I’ve seen so many patients who are struggling with fear and depression because of their vision loss come to the Weigel Williamson Center and leave with a smile on their faces and an improved quality of life,” Jones said.

Jay, a former medical receptionist with Truhlsen Eye Institute, said she is excited to join a clinic that brings hope to patients living with low vision.

“I am excited to have the opportunity to help people with their vision challenges. It makes me really grateful to come to work every day,” Jay said.

And for several months Jay has worked alongside Jones to learn the ropes.

“She has an endless list of tasks that she effortlessly takes care of, and I’ve enjoyed working alongside her and seeing her enthusiasm for the center. She’s been one of its biggest champions,” Jay said.

Along with managing the clinic, Jay said she also will oversee the low vision store and its inventory, maintain the database of devices patients use, help on the front end with patient check-in, and other administrative tasks.

“I’m passionate about helping people with low vision. Because of my own struggles I feel very personally connected to them,” Jay said.

Three fun facts about Jay:
- I live close enough to walk to work, it only takes me 10 minutes.
- I lived abroad in China where I taught English for two years after graduating from college
- I have a German shorthair pointer, Eddy, named after a German pro-cyclist because my husband is an avid cyclist.

Q Street Quartet serenades Pat Jones in celebration of her retirement.
Money Management Made Easier
Kristen Mercado, OTD, R/L

Identifying Currency
• Paper currency has large numbers printed on the back side of each bill (except the $1).
• Organize bills in your wallet in order of amount and place them with the back facing you.
• Each coin has features to help you identify them through touch.
  » Quarter: Ridges on outer rim easily felt by running fingernail over outer edge of coin.
  » Nickle: Smooth edge
  » Dime: Ridges on outer edge like quarter
  » Penny: Smooth edge as well as copper in color
• A currency reader is available to read value on paper currency.
  » Currency readers are free for persons with significant vision loss through the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

Paying with checks
• Most banks have the option for you to order large print checks which are about the size of a business check with larger text and bold and raised lines.
• If you are not ready for large print checks, consider selecting the plain checks with no background design. Select a black font.
• Check guides are available. These are thick paper or plastic with cut outs, helping you to stay on the lines when writing out checks.
• Select a bold and black pen for better contrast when writing your check or writing in your check register.

Writing in your check register
• Large print check registers are also available to make keeping track of checks, deposits, and balances that much easier.
• Large numbered calculators, as well as talking calculators, make it easier to balance your checkbook.

Alternative payments
• Some cell phones offer easy alternatives to paying with a credit or debit card. For example, the Apple iPhone has Apple Pay which allows you to simply hold your phone over a credit card machine and your payment is complete!
• Many companies offer automatic payment systems which can save you from writing a check or making a payment each month. The funds are pulled automatically each month from your account.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST CORNER

Question:
When should I have a low vision evaluation?

Answer:
Individuals with irreversible vision loss can benefit from low vision services as soon as they start to have difficulty participating in daily activities, such as reading, writing, watching television and enjoying hobbies. Difficulty may occur even with an acuity as good as 20/40, depending upon the task that is being performed. With the right vision aid and training, many individuals with low vision can better participate in their daily activities. If you have had a low vision evaluation in the past and your present vision aids are not as helpful as they once were, then consider a follow-up evaluation to see if different or higher power vision aids and training can enable you to better participate in your favored activities.

ASK DR. SHEPHERD

HOW TO MAKE A GIFT

To make a donation to the Weigel Williamson Center, contact Matt Pohren at the University of Nebraska Foundation at 402.504.3338, or matt.pohren@nufoundation.org.

Gifts may also be made at www.unmc.edu/lowvision
Imagine the Weigel Williamson Center as a football team, with Dr. Shepherd playing quarterback and the staff filling other key positions.

The team ranks among the best. Yet who regularly roots the players on? The Lions Clubs of Nebraska and Iowa, says Allen Darell. “We’re their cheerleaders,” he chuckles.

But the Lions Club has played a much bigger role in the Weigel Williamson Center’s success. And Darell, a 40-year member of the Millard Lions Club in Omaha, has been heavily involved.

In 1999, Darell and other Nebraska Lions met with UNMC’s Kathy Von Dollen and Pat Jones to determine how to help those with low vision. It was a natural extension of the local Lions relationship with UNMC that began in the 1960s with the Lion’s support of the Nebraska Eye Bank.

In 2007, when UNMC secured funding for a low vision facility, the Nebraska and Iowa Lions began fundraising for specific needs in the new center. They raised $328,000 through the individual clubs and a grant from the Lions Club International Foundation. These dollars allowed the center to establish a lending device program, equip an exam room and purchase the Dynavision, a device used to evaluate and treat visual field loss in stroke patients and patients with traumatic brain injuries.

Three years ago, members also raised money to fund the installation of WIFI in the center and iPads for patient use.

And beginning in 2013, local Lions began supporting the center in another way, providing local patients with transportation to the center for workshops and monthly activities. Lions Club members also volunteer to staff the front desk once a week.

“We’re so thankful to the Lions,” says Dr. John Shepherd. “We wouldn’t be able to provide the services we do without their incredible ongoing support. We are tremendously grateful.”