

SPRING 2016

# Friends Newsletter



Wisconsin Council of the  
Blind & Visually Impaired

## Sylvia Johnson Wished to Spread Word about Council Services

Sylvia Johnson didn't know who to turn to with her low vision problems until a friend told her about the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired.

Johnson, who lives in Madison, met with Low Vision Therapist Amy Wurf to get an evaluation and, since then, has been extremely impressed with the help she has received at the Council. Her low vision evaluation helped her receive valuable aids through the Sharper Vision Store.



Sylvia Johnson shares her experience with the WCBVI Low Vision Clinic as the clinic celebrates its one year anniversary.

"I was so impressed and Amy was just wonderful," Johnson said. "I was almost overwhelmed when I first walked through the door because I had no idea there was so much out there that could help me. Everything she talked about and all the items they have in the store are just amazing."

Since her visit to the Council last fall, Johnson has told others about the services provided through the Low Vision Clinic and Sharper Vision Store.

"I want more people to know and I've been telling more people about it," Johnson said. "Telling people, 'Please, stop in, there are so many good products there.'"

While she was nervous for her initial low vision evaluation, Wurf's kindness, professionalism and expertise eased Johnson's fears.

"She was so helpful on giving me suggestions on what to do and how to improve lighting in my home

and to make sure there were no obstacles in my way around the house," Johnson said. "Just general tips on living with low vision."

An important way for the Council to receive more recommendations is through patient referrals from vision specialists. Since the Council opened the Low Vision Clinic in February, 2015, more doctors are starting to tout the Council's services, but Johnson believes there are many who don't realize what the Council does to help the blind and visually impaired community.

"I don't know any place, anywhere, that provides that type of service," Johnson said. "I've been talking to people in our church congregation who need low vision help, telling them to please go check it out."

Johnson and her husband, Mel, have lived on the east side of Madison for many years and are fortunate to have the Council close to home.

"My husband has been very supportive throughout this whole process," Johnson said.

Having received valuable guidance from Wurf, and several useful products through the Sharper Vision Store, it's a safe bet that Johnson will continue to tell people about the Council every chance she gets. ■

**"I was almost overwhelmed when I first walked through the door because I had no idea there was so much out there that could help me."**

**– Sylvia Johnson**

## Upcoming Council Webinars and Events

**Tuesday, April 19**

### **Low Vision Forum: Community Involvement and the Business Enterprise Program, Green Bay**

Featuring a speaker on personal advocacy, a panel discussion on having your voice heard with service providers or local government agencies and information on the Wisconsin Business Enterprise Program.

**Wednesday, April 27**

### **Webinar - Establishing and Managing a Low Vision Support Group**

How are support groups for persons with vision loss established? What does it take to manage a group? What keeps group members coming back? These questions will be addressed.

**Tuesday, May 3**

### **Dining in the Dark, Appleton**

Join the Council and GingeRootz Asian Grille for another unique event where sighted guests experience a delicious multi-course meal without the use of their sight.

**Friday, August 12**

### **Central Wisconsin Low Vision Fair, Wausau**

Featuring educational breakout sessions and vendor fair with products and services to help you learn to have a more comfortable life while living with low vision.

**Wednesday, August 17**

### **Webinar - When to Stop Driving and How to Talk to Your Loved Ones about it**

As individuals deal with diminishing vision, there comes a point where one must determine they are no longer safe to drive. This webinar will focus on how to make these decisions along with tips for adult children struggling to have this conversation.

**For more information on these activities and events, check the events tab on our website, Facebook and Twitter or call 1-800-783-5213.**

## Low Vision Clinic Celebrates its First Year in Service

The Council recently celebrated the first anniversary of operating our in-house Low Vision Clinic.

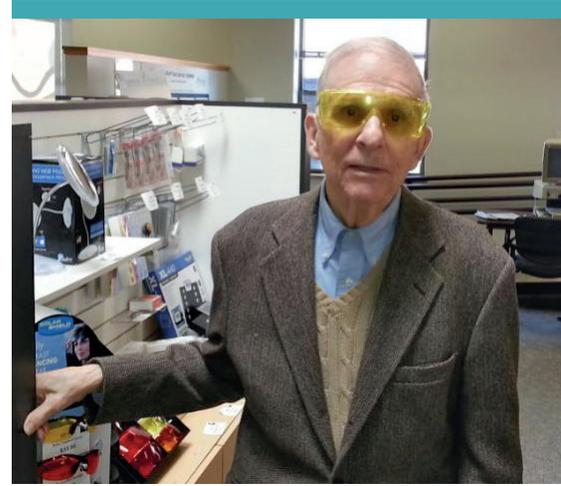
The clinic, under the direction of Low Vision Therapist Amy Wurf, began offering low vision evaluations in February 2015. Wurf came to the Council in January 2015, after 20 years of serving veterans with low vision in VA hospitals in Wisconsin and Illinois.

"It's interesting because I'm working with such a variety of people now than when I was with the VA," Wurf said. "Coming here, I get to work with men, women and people of all ages and a lot of different eye conditions, so it's really helped me stretch as a professional to get back into all the different eye conditions and try to help everybody."

**Madison resident Bob Davis met with Low Vision Therapist Amy Wurf for an evaluation after complications from cataract surgery last summer. "She made a home visit and we were able to get some sunglasses. I think they look good on him."**

bought items from the Sharper Vision Store that have helped him see better and enjoy everyday activities. Dennis deNure, Davis' caregiver, said meeting with Wurf has made life easier for Davis since last summer's surgery.

"We found out there was no treatment for this, but then Brent (Perzentka, Store Manager) informed us that you had Amy on staff that was real good," deNure said. ■



**Bob Davis wears special sunglasses recently purchased at the Sharper Vision Store.**

Madison resident Bob Davis was one of the many clients Wurf worked with in the past year. Davis came to the Council for a low vision exam after complications from cataract surgery last August. It was discovered Davis had a retinal vein occlusion or an "eye stroke."

After learning of his retinal vein occlusion, Davis visited Wurf at the Low Vision Clinic last fall. Since then, Davis has



# The White Cane Appeal

The Council has a long tradition of providing free white canes to people who are blind and visually impaired throughout Wisconsin. You can help us continue this tradition with your gift to the White Cane Fund!

Through the years, the Council has placed thousands of white canes into the hands of people who are blind or visually impaired. Any Wisconsin resident who meets the low vision requirements is eligible to receive a free cane every two years.

With proper mobility training, a white cane can mean the difference between isolation and independence. This well-known symbol of blindness identifies someone as having significant vision loss. With the help of attentive drivers, a white cane allows a person with vision loss to cross streets safely and walk confidently throughout their neighborhood and beyond.

White canes are available through the Sharper Vision Store, located at the Council office in Madison, and at Vision Forward in Milwaukee.

Through your generous donations the Council can continue to provide this simple, yet life-changing tool to someone with low vision or blindness. To make a tax deductible gift, visit [www.wcblind.org](http://www.wcblind.org) or use the enclosed envelope. We appreciate your generosity!

To My Dear Family,

*As I look back upon my life, I realize how important it is to cherish the love of family and friends because time with them is precious and fleeting. There have been so many who have touched my life along the way, and many who have cared for me in my time of need.*

*Coping with my loss of vision has given me greater appreciation for organizations that truly have a passion for helping those in need, like the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired. I can't say enough about the many outstanding services the Council provided for me!*

*After I'm gone, I ask that you encourage our family and friends to make a gift to the Council in my memory. I can't think of a more worthwhile organization to support!*

*With all of my love,  
Mom*

Making a gift in memory of a loved one is a thoughtful way to acknowledge how special that person was in your life. Memorial checks can be made payable to WCBVI and mailed to 754 Williamson Street, Madison, WI 53703 or made online at [www.wcblind.org](http://www.wcblind.org). Feel free to include this information in your loved one's obituary as a way for friends to show their support.

## The Big Share

March 1st was an exciting day for the Council as we partnered with Community Shares of Wisconsin for The Big Share! Generous donors contributed gifts of **\$2,750** to help the Council continue to fulfill our mission of providing vision services, education and legislative advocacy.

The Big Share was an online giving day to benefit the 70 non-profit members of Community Shares of Wisconsin. In total, The Big Share raised more than \$263,000 in 24 hours! Thanks to all who donated and helped us promote this successful online event.



## Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired

753 Williamson Street  
Madison, WI 53703

608-255-1166 • 800-783-5213  
[www.wcblind.org](http://www.wcblind.org)

NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
MADISON WI  
PERMIT #2783

## Speaking about Changing Vision

Are you looking for an experienced, outgoing speaker who can talk about issues related to changing vision? The Council organizes a Speakers Bureau which consists of staff, board members, and friends of the Council who can speak about a variety of subjects related to vision.

You can explore the list of topics on our website at [www.wcblind.org/speakersbureau](http://www.wcblind.org/speakersbureau).

Contact our Director of Community Relations and Marketing Gale Hellpap at **608-237-8113** or via email at [ghellpap@wcblind.org](mailto:ghellpap@wcblind.org) to learn more about our talented speakers and what they can offer you or your organization.



## Stay Connected

Would you like to keep up with the Council's events, news, and current trends related to blindness or vision loss? We would love to send you "On Sight," our free, monthly e-newsletter. Please send an email to Justin Lemke at [jlemke@wcblind.org](mailto:jlemke@wcblind.org) or call **608-237-8119** to join our mailing list. You can also follow us on Facebook, Twitter ([@TheCouncilWI](https://www.facebook.com/TheCouncilWI)), and find many resources at [www.wcblind.org](http://www.wcblind.org).