

# **EyePower** *Spring 2005*

*News and Information from the Low Vision Center*

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## **EyeView**

*by Bill Rolle, Executive Director  
Low Vision Center*

Welcome to the Low Vision Center's newly renamed and redesigned newsletter. It's our attempt to bring you more information in a more user friendly format. At the same time we have included, on a separate sheet, information on the many low vision aids we demonstrate and sell. We hope you like the new name, format and additional information.

This newsletter has an article by Mary Hoyt, one of our Board members, who suggested the "EyePower" name and writes on how she has dealt with her macular degeneration.

We also have some "Helpful Hints" from Ellen Markham, a Low Vision Center client. Plus, we have a "Winning Attitude" piece, notice of two new drugs being developed and a reminder that the Center is forming a second support group.

You may also notice that we have modified the Center's name to read: "Low Vision Center." We dropped the "Information" because it became too unwieldy and we do so much more than provide information.

We love to hear from you, so please let us know if you have comments on what we have to say in the newsletter.

## **What "EyePower" Means to Me**

*by Mary Hoyt, Board member  
Low Vision Center*

When I was diagnosed with Macular Degeneration, I thought it would be the end of my active, independent, live-alone life. My impaired vision, I was told, could not be reversed. It was devastating. Where would I find a caring person who understood what was happening to me, someone with the time, patience and expertise to teach me to cope with vision loss.

Luckily, I found all that—and an emotion I have come to call "eyepower"—at the Low Vision Center in Bethesda.

The Center has been helping people with Macular Degeneration, Glaucoma, Cataracts and other eye diseases for more than 25 years. Setting up my free appointment with a Center staffer in the non-profit's office was easy. In a one-on-one meeting, my personal concerns were thoroughly addressed. Questions about low vision technologies and research, local resources, were discussed. Electronic aids and simple gadgets for daily living were there for me to test.

I came away thinking, well, perhaps I'll be able to manage pretty well after all.

It took several months for me to realize that I was developing full-blown eyepower.

Having eyepower does not mean that I see better now, only that I feel like I do. It has taken a little time, but the old me is coming back. Armed with confidence, optimism from the Center's guidance, bolstered with a few of those Center "bells and whistles" for impaired vision, I'm beginning to view the future more calmly and clearly.

## Winning Attitude

It's normal to react with despair when first confronted with the fact that you are suffering from vision loss. Everyone goes through that initial phase. However, we have found with many of our Low Vision Center clients that there is hope.

You might have to accept a modified lifestyle. But with a positive mental attitude and access to some of our low vision aids, you can return to doing many of the everyday activities you enjoyed in the past.

The Center has several Board members with low vision who have overcome the initial despair to become community activists. We have clients who report to us on a regular basis, the many activities in which they are involved. You can sense the energy and hear the enthusiasm in their voices. The point is, you can overcome the vision loss. You can continue to do many of your daily activities. It's up to you. In order to help you reach a positive mental attitude, we will run in each issue an example of someone who has overcome the despair of low vision, maximized his or her remaining vision and moved on to a productive life.

## Helpful Hints

*By Ellen Markham*

*Low Vision Center client*

**Building a Food Pyramid:** Designate certain shelves in the refrigerator for specific items, so that when you reach inside, you will know immediately what is on a particular shelf. Use the top shelf for beverages, the next for fruit, the next for vegetables and place the meat on the bottom shelf.

In the freezer, reserve one shelf for bakery goods, one for beef, one for chicken and place the vegetables on the door. To aid visitors or helpers, put up signs that indicate the purpose of each shelf.

**Organizing Kitchen Cabinets & Drawers:** It's important to have only one layer of bottles. Place them in the front, on their sides and label the contents in large print. Take the cereal box, enlarge the hole and use a giant funnel to pour the cereal from the box into a bottle. Then label that bottle and place it on its side. Also use this system for flour, sugar, rice, macaroni, etc. It keeps the food fresh and crispy. You can also use this to store paint, but use half-gallon size milk bottles to store the paint.

For cabinets, use under the bed boxes and fill them with pots and pans. Once again use only one layer so that you can just pull each one out, without reaching in the back in order to get the pan you need.

## Support Group Forming

We're in the process of forming a second support group and need a couple more participants in order to start the group. Please call us at 301-951-4444 to let us know if you have an interest in participating in the new group.

**Tip:** Dr. Thomas Porter, St. Louis Medical School, points out that each low vision aid is designed for a certain job. He suggests that you organize the aids by time of task and the task's required working distance. For instance, use a CCTV machine or some type of strong reading glasses for reading a book or lengthy magazine article. He adds that for very short tasks such as reading a menu, try a small pocket magnifier. An intermediate time need, might be best accomplished with some type of stand magnifier. Try his suggestions; you may be pleased with the results.

**New Breed of Cell Phones:** Don't despair when attempting to use the ever-smaller cell phones. The Japanese are working on two versions that will be more user friendly to those with low vision. One has larger buttons and is easier to use. The other responds to voice directions. Stay tuned for further updates on their respective availabilities.

**Web Sites Grow Up:** A recent Washington Post article offered some guidelines on how to make web sites easier to use when your vision lessens. They include:

- Use larger type. Outlook Explorer can enlarge the type within its program.
- Try whole screen magnification using BigShot Screen Magnifier 2.1 software. It can enlarge on-screen images up to 200 percent.
- ZoomText 8.1-magnifier software can enlarge on-screen images up to 16 times and features color, cursor and pointer enhancers.
- Proper lighting is a necessity. Dimmed room lights enhance computer-screen brightness, but can obscure the keyboard.
- The FeatherTouch Keyboard Light sits on

the work surface and uses a fluorescent bulb to illuminate the keys.

- Biggy software provides a choice of double-size, ultra-visible cursors and pointers.
- Large-print keyboards are available from VisiKey, with some designed specifically for Net surfing.

**Newspaper Information Access:** The National Federation of the Blind now offers access to a variety of daily newspapers via its NFB-NEWSLINE. You can access today or yesterday's papers as well as the Sunday paper, if one is available. You have 200 newspapers to choose from. Call toll free 1-888-882-1629 for further information or to sign up.

**Fitness Friendly:** Seneca Physical Therapy and Wellness Center in Rockville, Maryland, has recently participated in one of our "Vision Friendly" reviews. The Center staff has adopted many of our suggestions and is now more "vision friendly". They specialize in "functional fitness" that better prepares one for everyday activities.

**Center Support:** The Social List of Washington, better known as "The Green Book," has committed to donate a percentage of their revenues from the sale of the 2006 edition to the Low Vision Center. The 2006 Green Book will be published in September 2005 and contains the names of 5,000 socially prominent and successful persons living in the Washington metropolitan area. One has to be "invited" to be listed.

**Tell Your Friends:** Perhaps you have friend who has low vision. Give us his or her name and address and we'll send that person a copy of our quarterly newsletter as a favor to you.

## **Lord & Taylor Sale To Benefit Low Vision Center**

Call us today to purchase your \$5.00 ticket to a private sale hosted by Lord & Taylor at Tysons Corner to benefit area charities. The entire \$5.00 ticket price to the "Benefit Bash" will go directly to the Low Vision Center and help us help you to continue to maximize your remaining sight.

The event-filled day is scheduled for Tuesday, March 22, 2005 and will include fashion, authors and book signings, children's events, special savings and more.

Don't miss it, call 301-951-4444 today.

## **Two New Macular Degeneration Drugs Under Development**

The Wall Street Journal reports that one is being developed by Eyetech and marketed by Pfizer Pharmaceuticals. It's called "Macugen." The second is under development by Alcon.

According to the financial newspaper, "Macugen" is administered by puncturing the eyeball every six weeks. The Alcon drug is administered by dripping it on the eyeball surface twice a year. Phase III trials showed that both drugs had roughly equal results. They reduced risk of vision loss by a factor of two.

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**LOW VISION  
CENTER**

*Winning Ideas for Failing Sight*

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Free Matter for  
the Blind  
Handle as First  
Class Mail