When Stephanie Jefferson first came to Lighthouse Guild, her life was at a crossroads. She was losing her sight, preparing to go back to college and afraid. But with college preparatory assistance from our Adaptive Technology Center, she enrolled in Lehman College, majored in social work and graduated summa cum laude.

“Walking in the graduation procession felt like I was walking on a cloud,” recalls Stephanie. But since graduating in 2005, Stephanie’s vision has changed. And so has technology.

**Returning for More Training**

“I’ve returned for more training because I want to know how to navigate the Internet, and do even more things on the computer,” says Stephanie. “I’ve lost more vision, so I’m learning how to use the new screen readers and magnifiers.”

Fred Quick, Stephanie’s instructor in the Adaptive Technology Center, knows first-hand how steady advances in technologies are changing the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired. For more than a decade he has inspired clients to embrace the benefits of adaptive technology. As someone who is blind himself, Fred shares his own experiences to help others achieve their goals with the use of innovative technologies.
Inspiring Through Technology  Continued from page 1

Meeting a Full Spectrum of Needs

With clients ranging in age from 17 years and older, our Adaptive Technology Center instructors identify technology solutions to meet a full spectrum of needs. This includes college-bound students, vocational job seekers, as well as career professionals. Some have faced visual challenges since birth while others have only recently experienced vision loss. Some have worked with computers their entire lives and for others it is new to them.

Technology also allows our clients to become engaged members of a larger community. “We show clients how to connect to online counseling, disability or other interest groups,” Fred notes. “They can share their goals, their fears, and their experiences. This way they can have contact outside their immediate environment, and it lets them know they aren’t alone — there are a lot of others who have these same experiences, and they can share and help others. This is a great resource, especially for someone who might not be mobile.”

With many technologies available, it’s important that each individual is paired with the right tools. That’s why everyone who comes to our Adaptive Technology Center receives a comprehensive assessment. By understanding each individual’s vision challenges, professional and personal ambitions, and existing knowledge and experience, Lighthouse Guild instructors can recommend personalized solutions.

“After the assessment, we’re able to prescribe what technology solution is best for that client in order to be successful in what they’re going to do — whether it’s going to college or finding a job,” explains Fred.

Technology Advancements Enhance Lives

Technology advancements that enhance the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired have been substantial, and they continue to progress at a rapid pace. Our instructors are actively engaged with the technology and accessibility communities, and frequently provide feedback to software developers about enhancements that could positively impact the lives of our clients.

But as promising as the future of technology may be, for our instructors the true reward is in that moment when a client discovers and successfully uses technology to pursue their goals.

“Here, I’ve been embraced by people who care,” explains Stephanie. “They’ve always given me the courage to take each step forward.”

“When clients return to tell us how our training has helped them to complete school, to get the job they wanted, to achieve goals they never thought they could achieve: I just can’t describe how rewarding that is,” says Adaptive Technology Center Supervisor Angel Pacheco.

“Here, I’ve been embraced by people who care,” explains Stephanie. “They’ve always given me the courage to take each step forward.”
Technology companies are bringing accessibility features into the mainstream. But for many — especially older adults — learning how to use these features can be intimidating. Lighthouse Guild’s Grunwald Technology Center is empowering people by showing them how technology can give back some of what vision loss has taken away.

At 92 years-old, Edythe Heyman proves that there is no age barrier to learning new technology. No longer able to read standard print, she has embraced accessible technology to help her stay informed and in touch.

“One of my great pleasures was taking The New York Times with me to the breakfast table and reading it. I can’t do that anymore,” says Edythe.

Technology’s Positive Impact

Using the iPad’s voice features, she can still enjoy her daily newspaper — and much more.

“Now I can access The New York Times, listen to the latest books and use email,” says Edythe.

The introduction of audio voice communications (voiceover technology) is making a meaningful difference in the lives of people who are visually impaired. It tells you what is on the screen and walks you through actions like selecting a menu option.

“Reading is not just the act of seeing the words with your eyes. Reading a book is getting involved in the story. Reading the news is about becoming

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informed,” explains Grunwald Technology Center Director Dorrie Rush.

As someone who has faced the challenges of progressive vision loss herself, Dorrie speaks from experience about technology’s positive impact. “When you are struggling to read it takes so much out of you. But with technology, you can still get the same satisfaction by listening.”

The increased popularity of smart phones, tablets and computers has led to a growing number of people with vision loss wanting to use these devices. With referrals from other Lighthouse Guild programs, from ophthalmologists, and even from former program participants, the majority of Grunwald Center clients are over the age of 60.

**Continuing to Communicate**

Steven Cohen, 69 year-old paleontologist, has a visual impairment that prevents him from reading standard print. But now that he’s learned to use the accessibility features on his iPad and Kindle, he can continue to communicate with his colleagues, friends and family, as well as enjoy his science, history and biographical books.

“I was the guy who wanted to bring back carbon paper so I really resisted all these devices,” says Steven. “But as I lose more and more of my sight, I’ve become increasingly dependent on these things.”

For Edythe, learning to use email to stay connected to her family is important too.

“I wanted to be able to use email to keep in touch with my two sons,” she says. “Email has been a blessing! It seems like I’m always emailing them, and they’re emailing me too. I can do it anytime, and don’t have to worry if a phone call will interrupt them if they’re at their offices.”

**Recommending Appropriate Solutions**

A visit to the Grunwald Technology Center begins with a discussion about what each individual would like to accomplish. Then, the staff recommends appropriate solutions and trains clients to use the technology before transitioning to group sessions.

“In the group sessions, each person both teaches and learns from others,” explains Dorrie. “There’s so much going on in the groups. There’s social networking, and learning from each other — so much camaraderie and support.”

“I think that without knowing how to use the iPad, I’d be slowly sinking into depression because I couldn’t figure out how to do what I wanted to do.”

For clients like Edythe, knowing how to use these devices can be life changing. “I think that without knowing how to use the iPad, I’d be slowly sinking into depression because I couldn’t figure out how to do what I wanted to do,” she says.

Though accessible technology is already making a profound impact on her quality of life, Edythe isn’t done learning. “I know my iPad is capable of doing many more things. I’d probably have fun doing Internet searches. I’d like to learn even more.”
Technology Expands Options at The Heilbrunn School

At Lighthouse Guild’s Harriet and Robert Heilbrunn School, where students are visually impaired and often have additional disabilities, technology is a tool for both learning and empowerment. In an environment where no two children face exactly the same challenges, customizing technology solutions to the needs of individual students produces life-changing results.

“We use a variety of devices to support the learning of our students,” Director of Educational Services, Linda Gerra, EdD, explains. “Adaptations for students in the classroom include accessibility programs that enlarge text, Braille and large print keyboards, screen readers that give voice to on-screen text, and portable electronic magnifiers and devices that allow nonverbal students to express themselves with symbols and tactile cues.”

With so many options available, pairing a student with technology solutions that are right for them can make all the difference.

“He is a very special boy, and we are all thrilled to see him benefitting from a technology that’s right for him.”

“One of my students has significant multisensory needs and physical limitations,” says speech

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The Heilbrunn School takes pride in offering students the opportunity to access the same programs and devices as their sighted peers. This includes integrating iPhones and iPads into the classroom, and encouraging students to use devices at home to foster more social interaction with their families.

For parents like Wadra, it’s a reminder that despite Subhia’s disabilities, she is a typical teenager. “We have an iPad at home, and I see her playing games on it, making videos, taking selfies and pictures of her sisters.”

Evaluating Technological Advances

In addition to providing students with education and therapeutic services, The Heilbrunn School also evaluates how technological advancements can provide opportunities for students after graduation. Giving students access to the same computer technology used by their sighted peers increases their recreational and vocational options.

"As technology continues to change it’s important for us to evaluate its implications for our students," says Dr. Gerra.

Technology Expands Options Continued from page 5

therapist Jacqueline Morisco. Before coming to school, the student had received an adaptive communication device that he had great difficulty working because it had to be turned on by hand. By matching him with a solution that he can control with head movement, he has shown great improvement.

Enabling Students to Communicate

“He is now able to take on some academic challenges — communicating about the weather, and identifying the first letter and sound in a few words,” says Jacqueline. “He is a very special boy, and we are all thrilled to see him benefitting from a technology that’s right for him.”

Technology is enabling students to communicate in ways they never have before. And, as many students advance in school and their functional abilities improve, their use of technology grows.

Wadra Ahmad, whose two daughters, Subhia and her younger sister Mayy, are legally blind and have significant physical challenges affecting their balance and coordination, says she’s impressed with how technology has enabled 18-year-old Subhia to learn at The Heilbrunn School.

“Subhia has been taking tests on the computer in the classroom. It has a magnified screen and very large print so she can read it,” explains Wadra. “When she brings the tests home, they are written in clear and concise sentences. I would have never thought she would have been able to read, let alone be able to write and to formulate clear thoughts. It’s wonderful!”
When composer Johann Sebastian Bach experienced vision impairment late in life, it is believed he dictated his final scores for others to record for him. If he were alive today, technology would allow him to compose, record and edit his masterpieces himself. And he’d be able to learn these skills at Lighthouse Guild’s Filomen M. D’Agostino Greenberg Music School.

By learning how to use the latest in assistive music technology, musicians who are blind or visually impaired can hone their music production artistry using the same cutting-edge tools as fully sighted professionals. For those considering a musical career, access to these tools is a game changer.

“They technology allows me to record and mix without having to depend on a sighted person. It’s taught me to be confident in myself.”

Brooklyn native Jennine Wallace, who is visually impaired and has a mild case of cerebral palsy, first discovered her love of music as a preschooler at Lighthouse Guild. Now attending college, Jennine would like to pursue a career in music.

“My really like to major in music, but my college doesn’t have a music program,” explains Jennine. To complement her liberal arts education, she is pursuing studies at Lighthouse Guild’s Music School.

**Fueling a Sense of Independence**

Advances in music technology aren’t just tools to
unleash Jennine’s creativity. They are also fueling a greater sense of independence.

“When I was younger, I would have to ask someone to write down the notes I wanted in pencil,” says Jennine. “This technology allows me to record and mix without having to depend on a sighted person. It’s taught me to be confident in myself.”

Helping students like Jennine succeed is inspiring for instructors at the school too. “I can definitely relate to my students. We want them to progress and reach their dreams,” says Yo. “I share as much as I can. Many students always want to learn more, so we all have to keep learning to stay up to date on all the latest advancements.”

“Thanks to this program I’ve accomplished a lot. But I still have a long way to go to fully use this technology like Yo does,” says Jennine. “It’s made me realize I’d like to teach someday. My goal is to be able to open a music school for persons with disabilities someday — just like this one!”

Lighthouse Guild and members of the Pedestrians for Accessible and Safe Streets (PASS) Coalition joined Mayor Bill de Blasio at City Hall to sign Intro 216-B into law. The bill, co-sponsored by Council Member Mark Levine and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, tripled the number of Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) the Department of Transportation must install at city intersections each year.

Accessible pedestrian signals are devices that communicate information about the WALK and DON’T WALK intervals at intersections with signals in non-visual, audible formats to pedestrians who are blind or who have low vision.

The bill signing was the culmination of a multi-year advocacy effort by Lighthouse Guild and the PASS Coalition to improve pedestrian safety. Lighthouse Guild staff, organized by Lester Marks, Director of Government Affairs and Administration, testified in favor of increased APS installation before the City Council Transportation Committee, Manhattan Vision Zero Town Hall, and participated in a street crossing demonstration for New York City Council members that simulated the experience of pedestrians who are blind and visually impaired. Each event helped to reinforce the need for APS and contributed to the successful advocacy efforts.
Visionary Philanthropy: Palm Beach Events in Support of Lighthouse Guild

Lighthouse Guild Board Chairman James M. Dubin and Dinner Dance Honorary Chairman Arlene Dahl

Lighthouse Guild President & CEO Alan R. Morse, JD, PhD, with Honorees Darlene Jordan (left) and her mother Cathy Luccio

Lighthouse Guild Executive VP & COO Mark G. Ackermann and Dinner Dance Co-Chair Kit Pannill

Dinner dance Co-Chair Talbot Maxey (left) and Susan Malloy

Luncheon Co-Chairs Gail Worth, Carla Mann, Sherry Frankel and Junior Chair Christine DiRocco.

Ashley Bell, India Paull and Luncheon Committee member Lisa Selby

Mark G. Ackermann and Pauline Raiff

Lighthouse Guild presented a Low Vision Lecture featuring Yale Fisher, MD, who presented “What You Should Know about Your Vision.” Dr. Fisher is an ophthalmologist who specializes in vitreoretinal diseases.
Lighthouse Guild Recognizes Krzysztof Palczewski, PhD and Gabriel Kreiman, PhD

Two leaders in vision science will be recognized with prestigious Lighthouse Guild honors. Dr. Krzysztof Palczewski will receive the 2015 Bressler Prize in Vision Science and Dr. Gabriel Kreiman will be given the 2015 Pisart Award in Vision Science.

2015 Bressler Prize Recipient

Dr. Krzysztof Palczewski has a long history of leadership and service to vision research and is the John H. Hord Professor and Chair of the Department of Pharmacology at Case Western Reserve University. He has made advances in understanding hereditary blindness as well as the ability to slow retinal degeneration in adults. Dr. Palczewski’s findings could lead to new therapies for degenerative eye diseases.

Dr. Palczewski has served on many committees of organizations devoted to vision research, such as Prevent Blindness America, as well as the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO).

He has built one of the world’s preeminent Pharmacology Departments in collaboration with the Department of Ophthalmology and other departments at Case Western Reserve University. Dr. Palczewski has mentored dozens of successful students and postdoctoral fellows — many of whom now hold faculty positions throughout the world.

2015 Pisart Award Recipient

Dr. Gabriel Kreiman is an associate professor in the Department of Ophthalmology and Neurology at Children’s Hospital Boston, Harvard Medical School, where he has dedicated his research to the assessment of the brain. His findings have significantly influenced neuroscience and helped in the general understanding of the human brain and how vision develops.

Dr. Kreiman’s work is particularly important for integrating insights from anatomical, physiological and behavioral studies through quantitative computational models. Through his efforts, he and his team at Harvard University are leading important advancements in the understanding of vision loss.

2015 Bressler Prize Recipient
Krzysztof Palczewski, PhD

2015 Pisart Award Recipient
Gabriel Kreiman, PhD
Board member Kim Greenfield Alfonso has been honored by The District of Columbia Commission for Women with its “2015 Washington Woman of Excellence” Award, honoring women who have shown commitment, leadership and excellence in: public safety, public health, leadership, workforce development, education and community service.

In his role as Chairman of the All Macular Diseases Alliance International, Mark G. Ackermann, Executive Vice President and COO, presented to the House of Commons in the United Kingdom’s Houses of Parliament in January. At a reception for both Houses of Parliament, Mr. Ackermann and key physicians and scientists from around the world provided updates on recent advancements in the treatment of macular diseases.

Kellyanne Caivano, Senior Vice President, Finance, was inducted into the Beta Gamma Sigma international honor society. She was selected for membership in this honor society for AACSB accredited business programs because of her outstanding academic achievements in the graduate program at Iona College.

Leslie Jones, DMA, Executive Director, The Filomen M. D’Agostino Greenberg Music School, and Dalia Sakas, DMA, Director of the Music School, presented on the shared experience and nature of educational processes in the Music School, at “Visually-Impaired Musicians’ Lives”, an international conference held at the University of London in March.

Goldie Dersh, LCSW, PhD, Vice President, Behavioral Health Services, presented “Managing Problem Behaviors in Mental Health Populations” and Patricia H. Granados, RN, Vice President JGB Health Facilities Corporation and Director, GuildCare Network, presented “Supervision and Management — It Only LOOKs Easy!” at the Annual Conference of the Adult Day Health Care Council, held in Saratoga Springs.

NAPVI’s Executive Director, Susan LaVenture, delivered the opening address at the 2015 Biennial Conference of the South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment in Melbourne, Australia. Ms. LaVenture also presented “Preparing for the future for children who are blind with multiple disabilities” with Scott Truax of the American Foundation for the Blind at a Parent Conference hosted by the Maryland School for the Blind and the Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind.

Yu-Pin Hsu, EdD, OT, SCLV, Manager of Vision Rehabilitation Projects, Cathleen Wirts, Senior Vice President Strategy, Marketing and Communications, and Annemarie O’Hearn, Vice President Program Marketing and Training, presented “A Process for Incorporating Low Vision Assessment and Strategies into Treatment Planning for Adults,” at the American Occupational Therapy Association’s Annual Conference in Nashville, Tennessee.

Charles M. Campos, Director of Reimbursement, recently received his CPA license.


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Lighthouse Guild and its affiliates and subsidiaries do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, sponsorship, marital status, citizenship or national and ethnic origin. This applies to all programs and services and all policies or practices.
THE HEILBRUNN STUDENTS ORGANIZE A FOOD DRIVE

Students from the Heilbrunn School recently decided that they wanted to help the community by collecting food and canned goods for the New York City-based hunger relief organization City Harvest. They gathered 1,162 pounds of provisions over several months. This activity was educational as well as philanthropic. Each stage of their collection involved learning. Posting flyers throughout the building to request donations from Lighthouse Guild staff was connected with gaining new orientation and mobility skills. Weighing the donations required math abilities, while collecting, sorting and packing the donations enhanced vocational skills development.

Heilbrunn School students Gabriel Tolama and Jaelyn Maldonado collect donations for their school’s food drive.