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A SHINING LIGHT

Serving the visually impaired

By ANGELA ABRAMS, COT March 1, 2017

This certified ophthalmic technician gives back to her community by providing rehabilitation services.

As an ophthalmic technician, I refract patients, perform diagnostic testing, and counsel and educate patients. The goal is always the same: for the patient to have healthy eyes with the best vision. It is heartening to see so many of our patients' vision improve enough to make a big difference in their lives.



Angela Abrams, COT (left), joined the Lighthouse of Manasota board of directors in 2016.

Some aren't so lucky

Unfortunately, we also see patients who present with uncorrectable vision loss, which they experience for many reasons, and sometimes not much can be done to preserve the patients' vision. When patients experience sudden loss of vision, they often feel helpless and without guidance. As an ophthalmic technician and the spouse of an ophthalmologist, I know the importance of providing rehabilitation training to blind and visually impaired individuals so they can regain their independence.

Due to a lack of resources and time, I found it difficult to adequately educate these patients

during a regular office visit. It became very important to me to identify the organizations in my community that could provide these services.

Lighting the way

Lighthouse for the Blind (and, for our local patients, Lighthouse of Manasota) is one of the leading resources available to assist these patients. This organization provides services for clients of all ages who have limited or no vision. They provide training in adaptive methods and techniques, which are powerful, underutilized tools to help them perform everyday tasks. Lighthouse clients relearn activities of daily living, such as preparing meals, shopping, managing money, marking appliances, and writing checks.

Lighthouse provides orientation and mobility training in homes and the community with the goal of teaching these patients to travel safely, efficiently, and independently. After a case manager conducts a thorough evaluation and discussion with the client, they choose activities as part of an individualized plan of services.

My role

While attending a White Cane Day luncheon in October, I was impressed by how many visually impaired members of the community were able to attend the luncheon independently due to the skills they learned from training provided by the Lighthouse.

Recently, I had the opportunity to serve on Lighthouse of Manasota's board of directors, and I eagerly pursued it. As part of my job, I enjoy being able to contribute to the visually impaired community through volunteer service. In the near future, I will conduct lunch and learn programs in ophthalmic practices in my community. These programs will be to educate the ophthalmic technicians and staff about the services that Lighthouse of Manasota provides low-vision patients. I feel honored to represent this worthwhile organization that provides such a vital service. **OP**

Ms. Abrams completed the Ophthalmic Assistant program at Chattanooga State Technical College in 2005 and has been a Certified Ophthalmic Technician since 2010. Angela continues to work part time at a general ophthalmology practice in Venice, FL.

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