

# LIIONS VISION



A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS OF MULTIPLE DISTRICT 22 LIONS, LIONESS AND LEO CLUBS

SPRING, 2021

## Time to Turn the Page



PDG John Shwed

We are all involved in writing the story of America. Not many of us were alive to experience the flu pandemic of 1918. We read about it in the other chapters of the great American story. One hundred years from now future generations will get their knowledge of the Covid-19 pandemic from the pages of the story that we write. Throughout history, humans have learned to evolve and adapt to their environment.

Our reactions are similar to the way wildlife has learned to adapt to changes brought about by humans. Squirrels travel the electrical wires like highways in the skies, deer in Sussex County, Delaware have learned they can get a tasty, nutritious meal in the soy bean fields, and bold sea gulls have learned they can get a snack by swooping down and grabbing a French fry from an unsuspecting beach tourist's bucket of fries.

Our 4.5 billion year old Mother Earth is telling us it is once again **"time to turn the page."** Spring arrives March 21, a sign of rebirth, renewal, and continuation of life's drama. No doubt we are all frustrated over the lack of social interaction, the restrictions on businesses and the loss of thousands of our fellow citizens. But, we have adapted. We may not like them, but we have learned to deal with face masks. Traditional Lions fundraising projects were stymied. Schools were closed. But internet based technology like Zoom has enabled schools to educate remotely and for organizations to conduct business meetings and virtual fundraisers. Millions have now been vaccinated; millions more will be vaccinated in the months ahead. So we need to be ready. Hopefully, we will soon be able to return to life as we knew it before March of 2020.

Fellow Lions, you have been creative and generous in your support of LVRF during this crisis. As a reminder we need your donations in support of our annual opera-

tions and in our campaign to complete the Lions Vision Center Fellowship Endowment Fund. We understand the financial picture of our member Lions Clubs. I ask you as individual Lions, if you are able, to make a personal gift to the Endowment Campaign. Gifts from IRA distributions or from appreciated stocks are good opportunities to reduce tax liabilities. We are also working with our Wilmer Development partners and LVC Team to try to secure donations from non lions and external organizations.

We have **"turned another page"** with the retirement of long term Lions Vision Center Director Dr. Robert Massof . He has recorded an outstanding list of accomplishments during his tenure. We wish him well in his future endeavors. We welcome the new shared leadership Team at the Lions Vision Center of Dr. Judith Goldstein and Dr. Gislin Dagnelie. The highlights of Dr. Massof's tenure as LVC Director are featured in the center pages of this newsletter.

Fellow Lions **"Time to Turn the Page"** and make new exciting entries on the future pages of this great story - an exciting story of grit, perseverance, resilience, creativity, and innovation as we serve our MD-22 Lions Vision Research Foundation and people in need world wide.

*John J. Shwed*  
*LVRF Development Chair*

Looking for articles from previous issues of Lions Vision?

Visit [www.LionsVision.org](http://www.LionsVision.org) where issues from 2007 to the present are available.

# LVRF Chairman's Message

Fellow Lions of MD 22:

Can you believe it is convention time? The 98<sup>th</sup> Annual Multiple District 22 Convention is right around the corner and although we may not be meeting in person, I am sure the convention committee has done a great job of putting together a packed agenda for us to enjoy virtually. I am so proud to announce that LVRF will be holding a seminar during the virtual convention as well as participating in the Virtual Exhibit Hall. So please be sure to attend our seminar and check out the exhibit hall.

I want to say a huge thank you to all of you for your generous support of LVRF during this most difficult of times. I am so pleased to be able to share that we will be able to meet our operating budget requirements and that is only through the donations we received from clubs, individual Lions and the support of our major fundraisers. I know how difficult it has been for clubs to hold fundraisers this year so that you can not only support your local communities but also help our foundations in MD 22. I applaud all of you for your efforts during this pandemic. Please know how much the Board of Trustees appreciate your dedication and commitment to LVRF.

Fellow Lions of MD 22, be proud of the work that is being done every day at the Lions Low Vision Center and the Wilmer Eye Institute. Be proud of the impact that is being made on those individuals that are suffering from this terrifying condition. Please know that you are part of the team that supports the wonderful clinicians now led by Dr. Judy Goldstein and the difference they are making and the lives they are changing. Be proud that we are the leaders in bringing forth new doctors in the field of low vision through our Lions Low Vision Endowment program. And finally, be proud that through your support ground breaking research continues to take place at the center every day.

This year has seen great change at the Low Vision Center

with the retirement of Director, Dr. Robert "Bob" Massof. Under his leadership, the Lions Vision Center in 1991 shifted it's research efforts to the problem of "low vision." He rallied the Lions of the Multiple District to create a \$4 million endowment fund to guarantee the Lions Low Vision Center would operate in perpetuity.



He celebrated with us as we reached the goal in 2007. In 2009, he led the efforts to establish a Low Vision Fellowship Program and to this day it is supported by the Lions of MD 22. Dr. Bob is a fellow Lion and his dedication in helping us promote and support the foundation is never ending. He has traveled to our rallies, to our region and zone meetings, to our conventions, and yes even to our club meetings to tell the story of LVRF and the Lions Low Vision Center. He was always willing to help us educate our fellow members. Dr. Massof, thank you for your lifetime dedication to eradicate low vision and blindness!! Congratulations on your retirement!!

I want to say thank you to this year's Council of Governors, led by Council Chair PDG Charles Taylor for your support of LVRF. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as Chair of the Board of Trustees. I want to show great appreciation to our wonderful advisors to the Board and to the Wilmer Faculty and Staff that is always there when we need them. A huge thank you goes out to the wonderful Lions that serve as our current trustees, committee chairs, and constant promoters of this wonderful foundation. This is truly a "dream team."

Enjoy the convention and congratulations in advance to the MD 22 Convention Committee!!

*Chair Wayne Cole*

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CC Charles Taylor

# In Memorium



PDG Dalton (Dal) Mann was born on December 18, 1932 in Manns Harbor, NC. Upon graduation from East Carolina University with a degree in Mathematics in 1955, he joined the United States Air Force where he had various duties including flight navigator during the Viet Nam war. In 1967, he moved to the DC area stationed at the

Pentagon as a computer systems analyst. Upon retiring as a Lt. Colonel, he continued working first at the Pentagon and later in the White House communications room.

During his time in the DC area, he was very active in the National Recreation and Park Association, serving on several national committees, and the Maryland Recreation and Parks Associations. This work continued after moving to the Eastern Shore.

In 1995, Lion Dal retired, moved to Preston, MD, and joined the Hurlock Lions Club, having been recruited by his good friend Lion Cal Butt. He served as Club President for 2 years, Club Secretary for several years, and other positions within his club. From 2004-2005, he served as District Governor of District 22-B, the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

PDG Dal did not stop there. He continued to serve at the District and Multi-District levels in many capacities, including District Secretary, District Treasurer, 22-B Social Chair, 22-B Communications Chair as well as chair of several Multi-District committees. He served for several years as Secretary of the Lions Vision Research Foundation (LVRF) to which he devoted many years of effort. In 2010, he co-founded the LVRF Aim for Sight sporting clays tournament, which has since raised over \$100,000.

Lion Dal epitomized the Lions motto – We Serve. He gave tirelessly and was a great, respected Lion. He was recognized by receiving an LCI Presidential Medal from President Jimmy Ross, an LCI Leadership Medal from President Frank Moore, a Progressive Melvin Jones Fellowship and a Diamond Darley Traversers Fellowship.

Lion Dal passed away on April 9, 2021. He is survived by his brother, Harry C. Mann of Manns Harbor, NC and his daughter, Linda L. Mann, of Springfield, VA. Dal was preceded in death by his wife Marjorie Batts Mann and his sons, Raymond Carl Mann and William Guy Mann.

Honoraria may be sent to LVRF, PO Box 1714, Baltimore, MD 21203

**Set your sights on this!**  
**Mark  
Your  
Calendars**  
**for the**  
**Lions Vision Research Foundation**  
**Aim for Sight**  
**Sporting Clays Shoot Events**

**Two shoots are planned:  
one in the East, one of the West**

**The event in the West will be held at  
Bayberry Sporting Clays Venue  
on September 25**

**The event in the East will be held at  
Schrader's Outdoor LLC  
on October 16**

**Watch for Flyers announcing these events  
closer to shoot off time in your e-mail box or  
District Newsletter**

## **20<sup>th</sup> Annual Lions Golf Tournament** **in Honor of Richard Liebno**

**TO BENEFIT**  
**Lions Vision Research Foundation**  
**American Diabetes Association**  
**Lions Hearing & Speech Action**



**Friday ~ May 28<sup>th</sup> ~ 2021**  
**Shotgun Start ~ 7:30 a.m.**  
**\$90 per golfer**  
**Oakmont Green Golf Course**  
**2290 Golfview Lane, Hampstead, MD 21074**

For more information  
Call Tournament Chair Lion Gary Buchman @ (410) 795-8174  
or e-mail to [gary.buchman@gmail.com](mailto:gary.buchman@gmail.com)

To Register, send a list of golfers giving name, address, phone number and email address of each and mail with a check made payable to "Lions Clubs Zone III Fundraiser" to the Tournament Treasurer, Lion Martin Bonura 1743 Deer Park Road, Finksburg, MD 21048

# How to use a QCD to Donate to LVRF



If you are subject to the IRS requirement of having to take required minimum distributions from your IRAs, you may want to consider a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD).

## What is a QCD?

A QCD is a direct transfer of funds from your IRA, payable directly to a qualified charity, as described in the QCD provision in the Internal Revenue Code. Amounts distributed as a QCD can be counted toward satisfying your RMD for the year, up to \$100,000. The QCD is excluded from your taxable income. This is not the case with a regular withdrawal from an IRA, even if you use the money to make a charitable contribution later on. If you take a withdrawal, the funds would be counted as taxable income even if you later offset that income with the charitable contribution deduction.

## Why is this distinction important?

If you take the RMD as income, instead of as a QCD, your RMD will count as taxable income. This additional taxable income may push you into a higher tax bracket and may also reduce your eligibility for certain tax credits and deductions. To eliminate or reduce the impact of RMD income, charitably inclined investors may want to consider making a qualified charitable distribution (QCD). For example, your taxable income helps determine the amount of your Social Security benefits that are subject to taxes. Keeping your taxable income level lower may also help reduce your potential exposure to the Medicare surtax.

## Am I eligible for QCDs?

In prior years, the rules that permitted QCDs required reauthorization from Congress each year, and those decisions were sometimes made late in the calendar year. With passage of the Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes (PATH) Act of 2015, the QCD provision is now a permanent part of the Internal Revenue Code. This means you can plan your charitable giving and begin reviewing your tax situation earlier each year.

**Tip:** With the 2020 tax law changes, there's 1 additional factor to consider: you may take advantage of the higher standard deduction (\$12,400 for single filers, \$24,800 if married and filing jointly). This means that if you claim the standard deduction, you won't be allowed to itemize things like charitable donations. However since QCDs are not includable in income the QCD is also not deductible. As such, the QCD can remain an option for your charitable giving, even if you claim the standard deduction in a given year.

## The rules of QCDs

A QCD must adhere to the following requirements:

- You must be at least 70½ years old at the time you request a QCD. If you process a distribution prior to reaching age 70½, the distribution will be treated as taxable income.
- For a QCD to count toward your current year's RMD, the funds must come out of your IRA by your RMD deadline, which is generally December 31 each year.
- Funds must be transferred directly from your IRA custodian to the qualified charity. This is accomplished by requesting your IRA custodian issue a check from your IRA payable to the charity. You can then request that the check be mailed to the charity, or forward the check to the charity yourself. **Note:** If a distribution check is made payable to you, the distribution would NOT qualify as a QCD and would be treated as taxable income.

The maximum annual distribution amount that can qualify for a QCD is \$100,000. This limit would apply to the sum of QCDs made to one or more charities in a calendar year. If you're a joint tax filer, both you and your spouse can make a \$100,000 QCD from your own IRAs.

*PDG Larry Burton*

*This Lions Vision is somewhat different from preceding issues; the pandemic and other events have forced changes in our ordinary life and also to this newsletter.*

*I was sitting quietly in mid-December at my computer when I got a rather cryptic e-mail stating that Dr. Massof was retiring as of January 1. Of course my mind teased me with all the various reasons why this could be happening with apparent haste and I was truly concerned! Later word reassured me that Dr. Bob was simply retiring somewhat past the normal age of retirement to enjoy his family and that he would still be a contributor to the Lions Vision and Vision Rehabilitation Center.*

*And so Dr. Bob is no longer at the helm – but he is still on board with a steady hand on the rudder!*

*The next step quickly followed as announced by Dr. Peter J. McDonnell, Director of The Wilmer Eye Institute, to his colleagues, "Effective January 1, 2021, Dr. Judith Goldstein will be taking on the leadership role of the Lions Vision Research and Rehabilitation Center, and Dr. Gislin Dagnelie will be the Associate Program Director."*

*Many in the LVRF family, past and present, have provided their thoughts about their relationship with Dr. Bob and they are shared in this issue starting on page 6.*

*Lion Bill Strauss, Editor*

*Enjoy!*

# From the LVRF Administrative Manager



Lion Sue Parks

Spring is a time for renewal and hopefully this year a return to 'normal.' Let's take a look at what LVRF has to offer and what you can offer to LVRF.

LVRF serves an incredible need and, as you may imagine, these services cannot be provided without your support. So let's take a look at how you as an individual or your club as a whole can support this initiative.

## LVRF Recognition Program

### "120 Club"

Donate \$120 or more to become part of the "120 Club" and receive this beautiful lapel pin. Arrangements can be made to have the Pin presented to the honoree at a place of your choice by an LVRF trustee.



### "Knights of the Blind"

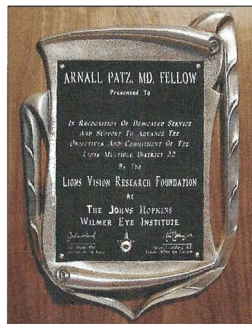
For a \$1000 donation, this special "Knights of the Blind" Pyramid can be awarded. The name of the honoree is engraved on a plate at the base of the pyramid. This award includes presentation by an LVRF trustee plus a "120 Club" pin.



### Arnall Patz Fellowship

A donation of \$2500 is recognized with the Arnall Patz Fellowship, which was named in honor of the Chairman Emeritus of the Wilmer Eye Institute who encouraged and developed the Lions/Wilmer partnership.

An LVRF Trustee will present the designated Fellow with the Arnall Patz Fellowship pin commemorative wall plaque and a lapel pin shown to the right.



There are also Progressive levels for the Arnall Patz Fellowship for additional \$2500 donations with a diamond added to the Pin for each new \$2500 level.

Note that funds may accrue over a five-year period for any of these awards.

Following in PDG Susan Timmons footsteps, as donations are received, I notify Clubs what, if any, donation balance may be expiring at the end of the current Lions Year.. If you have funds expiring, please take this opportunity to recognize a club member or an individual in your community for their service by ordering the appropriate recognition.

There is more information about the LVRF donation program on the LVRF website – [www.lionsvision.org](http://www.lionsvision.org) under the *donate* tab. Please take a few moments to review the additional detail in the Recognition Program brochure. Under this tab, you'll also find electronically-completable forms for making Donations and for requesting Recognitions.

Don't hesitate to contact me via email with your questions at [lvrinfo@gmail.com](mailto:lvrinfo@gmail.com) or [sparks@severnriverlions.org](mailto:sparks@severnriverlions.org). I look forward to hearing from you and seeing you when times permit.

## MD22 Convention

Of course, we were all looking forward to a convention in Gettysburg this year hoping the pandemic would dissipate in time for that to happen – but it didn't! The decision not to have a "live" convention could not be made until the last minute and so planning for a virtual convention has been accelerated and just at press time are we able to register.

Being virtual, all Lions in MD22 have the opportunity to attend this year. The LVRF is happy to announce two seminars, one for LVRF and one for LOVRNET.

Whether or not you register, you will still be able to attend these two seminars because they will be available at times other than at convention time.

The LVRF seminar is on Friday, May 21 at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and the LOVRNET presentation occurs the same day at 4 o'clock.

Watch for announcements in your district correspondence and newsletter for details. All club presidents and secretaries are on the convention committee distribution list via the district Cabinet secretaries.

**Mark your calendars for both of these events.**

It has been my pleasure and good fortune to work with Dr. Bob Massof over the past 20 years as a Trustee and then Chairman of the Lions Vision Research Foundation and most recently on LOVRNET. We are all very fortunate that he followed Dr. Patz's advice 32 years ago and got involved in the "dead end" area of low vision. Thanks in no small part due to his efforts, this area is no longer "dead end". His efforts and guidance have inspired many Lions, including this one, to assist in our small way in the area of low vision research and rehabilitation. The Lions of MD-22 are privileged to have such a close relationship with professionals such as Lion Dr. Bob.

*Lion John Lawrence*

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My association with Bob has so many memories as a friend who has always been professional in everything he sets his mind to doing. Jeanne and I have been very fortunate to have shared social time as Lions within the same Lions Club, events and the Lions Association.

My memorable photo: Bob and I met with representatives of Readers Digest discussing their support and Lions Clubs International Foundations during the initial phase of LOVRNET.



Regards,

*Clement F. Kusiak, Past International President*

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First of all Dr. Bob, congratulations on your retirement. As Chair of the Lions Vision Research Foundation Board of Trustees, I know I speak for all trustees when I say that you deserve to have the very best of retirements. Your work over your long career has helped so many people and touched so many lives. I know I also speak for the over 6,200 Lions in Multiple District 22, when I say thank you for allowing us to help you in your endeavors to do whatever it took to help those with low vision to live a better life.

Your commitment to helping us promote the Foundation and educate our membership about Low Vision and how we can help, was endless. You traveled great distances, spoke at many events, and was always there when we needed you. I can't even begin to calculate the miles you traveled to speak at LVRF Rallies, Club Meetings, Zone Meetings, and Region Meetings, as well as conventions. You made all Lions feel like they were a part of your team and that is why they always responded with overwhelming support for LVRF and the Low Vision Center. Please know you are so loved by the Lions of Multiple District 22 and the relationships you made with those Lions will live on forever.

My favorite quote is "Be the change you want to see in this world" by Gandhi. Dr. Massof, thank you for inspiring the Lions of MD 22 "to be the change" that could someday see the end to all blindness.

*Wayne Cole, Chair, LVRF Board of Trustees*

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We Lions take Bob for granted because he has always been there for us from the beginning of LVRF. We all know how smart he is, how dedicated he is, and how much he loves and believes in what he does. It's not so much his professional credentials that make him so extraordinary, but his humanity; his gentle spirit; his humility; his sense of humor. He treats everyone so kindly. I have never heard him raise his voice. Anyone who has ever met Bob is all the better for it. If there is one word

that, in my mind describes this man, it is Class.

The beauty of it all is that he is not done! I have a feeling that, despite all he has done, the best is yet to come! Congratulations on your retirement my friend, and the break's over!

*PTD Joe Gaffigan*

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Dr Bob has been an inspiration to Lions all across Multiple District 22 as well as a friend to Lion Ann and myself. He has set a Worldwide example for what a low vision clinic should include. When Ann and I had the honor of attending the dedication of the first low vision clinic in Shenzhen, China, it was obvious that it was a clone of our own low vision facility at Wilmer. Thank you, Dr Bob, for your dedication to making the Lions Vision Center the World leader in low vision treatment!

*Lions Ted and Ann Reiver*

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On my first visit to an LVRF Rally at Wilmer, I listened to Dr. Massof as he spoke to us about the Lions Vision Research and Rehabilitation Network. One of the Lions I was with told me that Dr. Massof had eight PhD degrees in all sorts of subjects. Listening to Dr. Massof, I believed that. He seemed to loom larger than life the more I saw him. On occasion, over the years, I even got to talk with him. Then, about four years after our first meeting, I attended a Rally with a Lion from my club who was attending his first Rally. I spotted Dr. Massof and told my fellow Lion that he had to meet this guy with eight PhDs. We approached Dr. Bob and before I could open my mouth he said "Hi Paul." I was stunned. Didn't even think he knew my name! Since then I have had the pleasure of working with him with LOVRNET and he remains larger than life.

*PDG Paul Hawkins*

Along life's pathway, we cross paths with some amazing people. You are certainly one of those unique individuals in my life that I've met through Lionism.

Thank you for the leadership you provided along with your support and guidance. You've been right there every step of the way. You've expanded our knowledge of low vision, it's causes and the need for rehabilitation services. We've also experienced firsthand the development of some of your technological devices for individuals with low vision from LVES to the IrisVision in collaboration with vision scientists.

Being involved in the LVRF has been an incredible journey we've shared since 1988. I'm thankful for our friendship. Working with you has been an amazing experience that I'll forever cherish.

Best wishes as you embark on the next chapter of life.

With gratitude,

*PCC Clare Newcomer*

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In talking with Lion Henry Cowell (who now lives in Colorado), we remembered our first Low Vision Education Program Presentation. It was held at the Newark Senior Center Bldg. in Newark, Delaware. Notice went out about it in the Senior Center Newsletter. A lady in attendance that night, had just moved to Newark, to live with her daughter, because she was losing her sight. Her daughter told her about our Lions Low Vision Education Program and recommended she attend. By the time she left that night, she knew who, what, and where to go for help in Delaware. It was because of your Low Vision Education Program, Dr. Bob. You helped us to help others.

Congratulations and Best Wishes,

*Lions Fred Williamson and Henry Cowell*

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It has been an honor and privilege to know and work with Dr. Massof for many years. He always had a warm smile when he spoke to the Lions. He was very dedicated and focused in his subject matter and he was always looking into the future. We thank him for sharing so much. We all learned and benefited from his wisdom.

*Bob Bullock*

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I met Dr. Bob Massof in 2004 when I was assigned to the LVRF Board of Directors with the goal of writing a paper that would describe the Lions Low Vision Center in detail. When the paper was completed, it was decided to prepare a video, using some of the prepared text with images provided by Bob. We worked on this together, and the final production was accomplished via the good services of the Takoma Park Lions Club.

On occasion, I would receive a request from someone for

advice on a specific vision problem, because of my assumed connection with the Wilmer Eye Institute. The requests ranged from dim vision to a hole in the macula. I always called Bob Massof, who would recommend the right Doctor at the Wilmer Eye Institute. He also would make contact with the Doctor and provide the name of the person who would be calling.

And there was the District 22-C annual "Talk for Sight." It began as the "Walk for Sight," but we found that it was easier to talk than walk. Bob Massof was always the keynote speaker, and representatives from many Clubs would attend and be prepared with a check for the LVRF. On occasion the donations would exceed \$5,000.

Overall, I came to consider Dr. Bob Massof a dear friend.

*PDG Ted Ladd*

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Pictured are (L to R):

Dr. Bob Massof, PID Darley Travers and DG Wayne Cole when Dr. Bob was guest speaker at the Hebron Lions club LVRF Banquet in 2018.

*Charlene Travers*

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I first got to know Dr. Massof during 1991-92. It was during that year that Lions International President Donald Banker came to Baltimore to witness the document signing which created the Multiple District 22 Lions Vision Research and Rehabilitation Center at the Wilmer Eye Institute. I have been honored to work alongside Dr. Massof for over 30 years in the quest to provide a better quality of life for the millions of people worldwide who suffer the effects of low vision.

During those years, Dr. Massof was the epitome of a Johns Hopkins researcher. He was always searching for the latest breakthrough in medical science and the best procedure in rehabilitation. Probably his most notable achievement early in his career as Founding Director was the development of the Low Vision Enhancement System which became known as LVES. Users remarked they could see their grandchildren for the first time. This early research grew into the latest research on the possibility of retinal transplants. Throughout his career Dr. Massof and his team conducted basic research continually looking for scientific breakthroughs, but he also had time for coming up with what might be simple ideas to help the visually impaired. Ever wonder how that big number got on our paper money? You guessed it. Dr. Massof and his low vision team communicated that idea to the US Treasury Department which now prints our paper money with a large denomination number on it so the visually impaired can more easily read the number.

**Continued on Page 9**

# THE FUTURE OF LIONS MD22 AND WILMER



**Dr. Judith Goldstein**

The world is finally moving toward a new paradigm of precision medicine, care that is tailored to the individual. However, for those of us serving the mission to improve the lives of those with vision loss, we have known and practiced like this for decades. Dr. Patz's scientific discovery led to a new generation of people with low, but usable, vision. It was clear, new technologies and the field of vision rehabilitation needed to advance and be tailored to this new group. The progress that has been made stems from the partnership between Lions MD22 and the Wilmer Eye Institute which has been responsible for new foundational knowledge that has translated to how we care for people with chronic vision loss. Our future demands we be strategic — we must ensure that we connect people to care, have experts to provide care, and advance the science and implementation of practices to those for whom a “cure” is not an option.

As the new Director of the Lions Vision Research and Rehabilitation Center and a low vision rehabilitation physician for over two decades, both in the MD22 community and as Associate Professor of Ophthalmology at the Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins, I have observed a rapidly graying population translate to a population in need of low vision care. Why is low vision care so important? Low vision care offers people with mild to severe vision loss (whose sight cannot otherwise be restored), the ability to improve their function and quality of life. It is actually a behavioral intervention that includes the use of specialized lenses, lighting, technology, counseling, and education and is performed by a unique team of rehabilitation professionals all focused on the goal of maintaining or improving independence and quality of life. The problem is that there are not enough low vision specialists to address the need, and for a number of reasons, it can be difficult to encourage student physicians to pursue a career in the field. Yet the need persists.

To address this “blind spot” in specialized vision care, Lions MD22 and Wilmer have been working to expand the number of trained physicians in the field. Over the past decade, The Lions of Multiple District 22 has underwritten \$100,000 annually for the Lions Low Vision Rehabilitation Fellowship program. The program provides a full year of clinical and research training for low vision specialists at Wilmer Eye Institute and has had eight fellows since its inception, with our team slated to welcome the ninth in mid-July 2021.

So why is it so hard to attract physicians to the field? One of the reasons is straight-up economics. There simply are other more lucrative career paths for a medical professional to follow, and many young ophthalmologists and optometrists, often burdened by school debt, opt for higher

paying careers in other specialties. The nature of low vision care requires a great deal of time and attention from faculty and staff to work with patients and caregivers to coordinate the best combination of treatment strategies. Visits involve extensive education, counseling, and in-depth evaluation and treatment with rehabilitative professionals, which simply takes longer and, of course, means fewer patients can be seen in a day.

Because low vision care is so connected to quality of life, taking on this problem has become our mission. It's incumbent upon us to put experts into the field so that they can direct programs, teach their students, and develop more skilled individuals to go out and care for people with vision loss. This idea of paying it forward is an ethos shared by both Lions MD22 and Wilmer. Dedicating one's career to rehabilitation medicine takes a unique commitment to caring for the entire person and the recognition that the success of treatment often depends on engaging and motivating the patient to understand and participate in the process. The Lions Low Vision Rehabilitation Fellowship entails a full year of intensive training at Wilmer and is open to ophthalmologists and optometrists who have completed their residencies. The program is structured such that the fellow's time is split 80% in the clinic and 20% doing research. As part of the research component of the program, fellows learn key data gathering, analysis, and writing skills that are needed to establish solid research careers.

As much as we can admire the progress the program has made, the sustainability of the program is essential, requires our support, and should now be the focus of the Lions MD22 and Wilmer's strategic partnership. Because the program relies on annual contributions and is the only low vision fellowship training program in the U.S., in 2019 Wilmer and the Lions, with community partners and grateful patients, committed to endowing the Lions Vision Fellowship training program. Working together, we are focused on ensuring the continuation of this unique and indispensable program.

As we transition from our 8<sup>th</sup> to our 9<sup>th</sup> Lions Vision Fellow in July 2021 and consider the thousands of patients served across the region we can be proud of the MD22 and Wilmer partnership both locally and internationally. In fact, the program is beginning to realize progress for our efforts. Proteges of former fellows are returning to Wilmer as fellows themselves and one of the former fellows who benefitted from the program is a glaucoma specialist from Thailand, recently returned to Thailand to help lead the low vision program at King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital. We really are planting trees whose shade we may not sit under. However, there still remains much work to be done. We must challenge ourselves to not only ensure the sustainability of the fellowship program, but also to educate and serve our communities such that people understand that more can be done to improve the quality of life of those with vision loss.

*Dr. Judith Goldstein*

*Chief, Lions Vision Research and Rehabilitation Center*



# HOPE IN SIGHT

Recently I got a message from my brother in India that they were observing "World Sight Day" in our hometown and he was the organizer (non-Lion activity). My AHA!! moment light came on. World Sight Day is an annual day of awareness held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of October, to focus global attention on blindness and vision impairment. Last year, World Sight theme: was "Hope In Sight" hence the title of this article. The day aims to bring global attention to vision impairment and blindness.

It was initially started by our own foundation the Lions Club International Foundation (LCIF) as part of the Sight First campaign in 2000. It is such a proud history! World Sight Day is now coordinated by the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IABP).

There are more than a billion people around the world who cannot see properly and have preventable vision impairment and can have major and long-lasting effects on all aspects of life, including daily personal activities, interacting with the community, school and work opportunities and ability to access services

The main aims of World Sight Day include: (a) To raise public awareness of issues surrounding blindness and visual impairment. (b) To influence Governments, and Healthcare Leaders to participate in and donate funds to blindness prevention programs. (c) To educate about blindness prevention. (d) To generate support for Vision programs and activities.

We remember that Helen Keller addressed the LCI Convention in 1925 and challenged Lions to become "Knights of the Blind in the crusade against darkness". We have made tremendous stride since taking that challenge. Since 1990 Sight First funds have enabled us to fight the major causes of preventable and reversible blindness. More than 30 million people have been impacted over the last 30 years.

The MD22 Lions Low Vision Rehabilitation Network (LOVRNET) was the realization of Dr. Massof's dream to care for patients with low vision. The most common causes of low vision are: cataracts, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy and age-related macular degeneration. This population with low vision is under served and are very often overlooked as many are medically indigent due to limited income.

We feel vibrant and dynamic serving the LOVRNET program. I believe that we have all been tasked with the great honor of helping others. Each of us have gifts we could give to support this transformation of LOVRNET. If you resonate with these words, you have been given the mission to share your gifts (talents) to support LOVRNET.

You can share your talent in LOVRNET transformation by contacting Lion Jim Miller at (410) 458-2390 or PDG Paul Hawkins at (301) 774-5229. They are looking forward to hearing from you. You can also find information on the LOVRNET website: [www.lovrnet.org](http://www.lovrnet.org)

We are all committed, generous and serving to make a difference. Let us lift ourselves to the next level of being useful and making a difference. "The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well." Ralph Waldo Emerson.

*Lion Bijoy Mahanti*

*Direct Service Coordinator,*



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Dr. Massof was a great Ambassador for the Center. He earned the respect of his peers and was recognized many times for his professional accomplishments. He spoke at countless Lions meetings around MD-22 and at our annual Rallies held at Johns Hopkins. I want to thank him for putting up with some of my antics at those events while sitting in the front row. Together we raised millions of dollars to operate the Lions Vision Center and \$4 million to endow its operation in perpetuity. With completion of that objective, at Dr. Massof's recommendation, the Lions agreed take on annual funding for a fellow at the Lions Vision Center who would be trained in low vision. Fellows trained in this program are now spreading their low vision knowledge around the United States and the world.

I am proud to call him a friend and I wish my friend good health and a happy, fun-filled retirement. You set the bar high for those who follow in your footsteps.

*John J. Shwed, LVRFB Development Chair.*

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My earliest impression of Dr. Robert Massof was sometime in 2000 when I attended my first LVRFB Rally. I believe it was at this LVRFB Rally when Dr. Arnold Patz was retiring as head of LVRFB and Dr. Massof was taking over for him. Needless to say, I was very impressed when I heard his credentials when he was introduced that day.

I began attending the regular LVRFB bimonthly meetings in 2009 when I began going through the chairs to eventually become the District Governor for 22-D in 2011/2012. Again, I was duly impressed when I listened to Dr. Robert Massof give his Wilmer reports along with other members of the Wilmer professional staff.

The year after I was district governor was when I really got to know Dr. Bob. I was asked to be the Chair of the MD22 LCIF Committee. Midway through that first year I was asked by PIP Clem Kusiak to remain around after an LVRFB meeting to hear about a new LCIF grant. I attended this meeting along with PDG Charlene Travers, Jim Dere-meik, PIP Clem Kusiak, and Dr. Bob Massof and at this meeting I and asked to be the co-chair of this LCIF grant. This meeting turned my impressions of Dr. Robert Massof into becoming first a close associate and then a friend.

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# History of the Lions Vision Research & Rehabilitation Center

## Part I: Low Vision Service

Dr. Arnall Patz was not one to take *No* for an answer. That was clear in 1951 when, as a young retina specialist, he and his colleague V. Everett Kinsey snagged one of the first extramural ophthalmology grants awarded by the National Institutes of Health to investigate the daring hypothesis that retrolental fibroplasia was caused by sudden oxygen deprivation when premature infants were moved out of the high-oxygen incubator environment. Their hunch proved correct and resulted in them receiving the Lasker Award in 1956, handed to them by none other than Helen Keller.



Drs. Kinzey & Patz receive the Lasker Award from Helen Keller

Dr. Patz's next daring idea was to use an Argon laser and pepper the retina of diabetic retinopathy patients with small laser burns, leaving the center not just intact but protected from blood vessel leakage that would have left them severely visually impaired.



It was Dr. Patz's third daring idea that proved hardest to fulfill, because it did not just depend on his own ingenuity, but required the commitment from a sleeping giant – the Lions of Multiple District 22. But we're getting ahead of ourselves here. To understand what drove Dr. Patz's latest idea we have to look to women who championed the cause of the visually impaired: Helen Keller and Dr. Louise Sloan. Helen Keller had urged him in 1956 to continue devoting his energy to the prevention of blindness, and he most certainly did that. But it was Louise Sloan, along with her assistant Adelaide Habel, who showed him from 1963 until close to her death in 1982 that optical and non-optical assistive devices can brighten the lives of patients whose vision he could not save or bring back. So when Dr. Sloan was no longer able to perform her mission of mercy to his patients, Dr. Patz realized a new and better low vision service should be founded, and there was an obvious place to turn for help – the Lions, who more than half a century earlier had been charged to become “*Knights of the Blind*”, by none other than Helen Keller.

But while it was obvious that Dr. Patz had the right idea, it wasn't so obvious how to get the Lions united behind it. His good fortune, after many attempts, came in the person of PID Murray Ryan, then head of the Johns Hopkins Telecommunications Department. How and when Dr. Patz found Murray, or whether it was Murray who found him, their encounter transformed an idea into reality. The 1988

MD22 Annual Convention adopted the idea of a formal partnership with the Wilmer Eye Institute and the founding of LVRF to manage the partnership on behalf of MD22. It still took 3 years for the Foundation to make the major financial commitment – raising a \$4M endowment and annual support of \$200,000 until that endowment would be completed. The official signing of the commitment took place in November 1991, in the presence of Lions International President Don Banker.



ID Murray Ryan & Dr. Arnall Patz

In the meantime the Lions Low Vision Service had been formed by the hiring of low vision optometrists Drs. Roanne Flom (whose husband Dr. Tom Raasch joined the research team) and Sarah Appel, soon joined by social worker Marie Leinhaas, LCSW-C, and a small staff. Several young optometry doctors took turns receiving training in low vision in those early years: Lisa Anderson, Laura DeMarco, and Sonya Braudway. The clinic was located in a row house on E. Baltimore St, five blocks south of Wilmer, so not ideal for patient referrals and contacts with other eye care specialists. It also became clear that low vision care was an expensive proposition: Most insurance companies did not recognize the need for low vision rehabilitation, so while the doctors could charge for their eye exams, the patients were responsible for the cost of rehabilitation services, as well as for the devices they needed to help them see better. It took the better part of a decade, and the help of many pioneering low vision doctors around the country, before Dr. Robert Massof and his team convinced the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid that low vision rehabilitation should be covered just like other forms of rehabilitation. By then the Center had long since left Baltimore Street and found spacious new quarters on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the 550 Building on N. Broadway, where research and clinical functions could finally operate side by side, and within a stone's throw from Wilmer.

In a separate development, thanks to a collaboration with NASA that sprang from another joint effort by Dr. Patz and PID Murray Ryan, Dr. Massof and his research team had created the prototype of a device that would revolutionize the world of low vision devices: the head-worn optoelectronic system lovingly called LVES – the Low Vision Enhancement System. First conceived as an idea in 1986, it took 7 years for a company, Visionics,



to start manufacturing it, but it then gave rise to a daring new program called the Comprehensive Vision Rehabilitation Program: Patients paid for the 3-day intensive program of evaluation, fitting, and training, and if successful they also paid to purchase the device. This program ran in parallel with the regular low vision clinic, so patients who could not afford an LVES or were not interested, were still fully served.

For 2 years this kept the low vision clinic in the black and grew the ranks: optometrists Dr. Stephen Feinberg and Joe de Rose, rehab specialist Jim Deremeik, social workers Nina Glasner, Nancy Hedstrom, and Debra O'Connor, and optometry fellows Suleiman Alibhai and Jeffrey Michaels. Then, in the middle of what seemed like a golden era, Visionics, failed due to the smaller-than-expected market for its 2 lb, front-heavy contraption that was technologically brilliant, but ahead of its time for lack of miniature cameras, screens and optics.

Lions played a central role in the clinic program: Not only did they spread the word about the CVRP and other excellent care available at Lions Low Vision Service for people with visual impairment, but they provided transportation service for clinic patients and even research participants. There were too many to name and do them all justice, but of those no longer with us, one stands out: Past LVRF chair Gene Hoffmaster was tireless, and never turned down a request until his own health problems would no longer allow him to drive all over Central Maryland to serve our patients. We were humbled by his kindness.



Gene Hoffmaster

When the CVRP ended; a lot of turnover followed. Drs. Flom and Raasch left for Columbus, to be replaced by Dr. Suleiman Alibhai, with Dr. Gislin Dagnelie assuming the role of administrative director. The social workers did not fit the slimmed-down service model, and even the fellowship training program stopped for a number of years, for lack of full-time supervision. But the center ran a successful professional education program based on the new Medicare policy, and Medicare's funding decision was soon followed by other insurance carriers, so in 1998 the clinic attracted Dr. William Park as the new director. Patient volume went up, and the clinic started its first satellite program, in Bethesda, in the early 2000s. Yet it was not until 2006, after Dr. Park had left, that the Center attracted Dr. Judy Goldstein, whose arrival was soon followed by completion of the \$4M endowment and the start of a new fundraising goal: supporting the annual Lions Low Vision Fellowship. Our first Lions-sponsored fellow was Dr. Alexis Malkin, 2009-2010, who has since become a Low Vision program director in Boston, and in subsequent years our fellows have been Drs. Tiffany Chan, Nicole Ross, Danielle Natale, Ashley Deemer, Rath Itthipanichpong, Micaela Gobeille, Kanjapat Temahivong, and Hang Nguyen. All over the US and as far away as Thailand, young low vision doctors are practicing what they learned under the wings of Dr. Goldstein, Dr. Robert Chun and former fellows Drs. Chan and Deemer, and re-

cently Dr. Belinda Weinberg; and our invaluable team of therapists: Katherine Cleveland, OT; Kristen Shifflett, OT; and Jim Deremeik, who has shepherded the LoVRNet concept from a dream into reality, even if that reality is going to require more TLC to prosper.

Many things have happened in the 15 years since Dr. Judy Goldstein took the helm of the clinic, and now of the Center. In 2012 we left the 550 Building to return to the "mother ship," Wilmer; we initiated LoVRNet, and low vision has come to play a much more visible role in the education of Johns Hopkins medical students and Wilmer's ophthalmology residents, and in the practice patterns of Wilmer's other specialists – even though our work spreading the word about low vision care is far from done. Our clinicians go out to 3 satellite clinics, with more to com

The MD-22 Lions can be justly proud: They funded the Center endowment and the annual Fellowship; assisted Wilmer in funding the Patz Professorship endowment; obtained matching funds from LCIF to launch the LoVRNet program; and are well on their way to funding the endowment to support the Fellowship into the future. Meanwhile, they have spread the good news about low vision care at the Center; brought in patients whose lives have been changed for the better; and given meaning to those quintessential two words that are synonymous with Lionism: We Serve. Somewhere, Helen Keller, Louise Sloan, Dr. Arnall Patz, and PID Murray are sitting together and smiling!



*Submitted by Lion Gislin Dagnelie, PhD  
Associate Program Director,  
Lions Vision Research and Rehabilitation Center*

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This new LCIF grant was approved in August of 2013 and has become known as LOVRNET (Low Vision Rehabilitation Network). The aim of LOVRNET is to bring low vision services to low vision patients through the use of volunteer service by the Lions of MD 22.

LOVRNET is still continuing to operate, although somewhat cut back by COVID-19. During this eight-year close association with Dr. Bob, I came to appreciate the great passion he had to help low-vision patients and the hard work that he was willing to do to make his dream come true.

I have been honored to work with Dr. Bob and I want to thank him for all that he has done for LOVRNET and LVRF. I also want to thank him for honoring me at the 25th Anniversary Rally of LVRF when I was given a one diamond Arnold Patz upgrade.

*PDG Ken Chew*



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