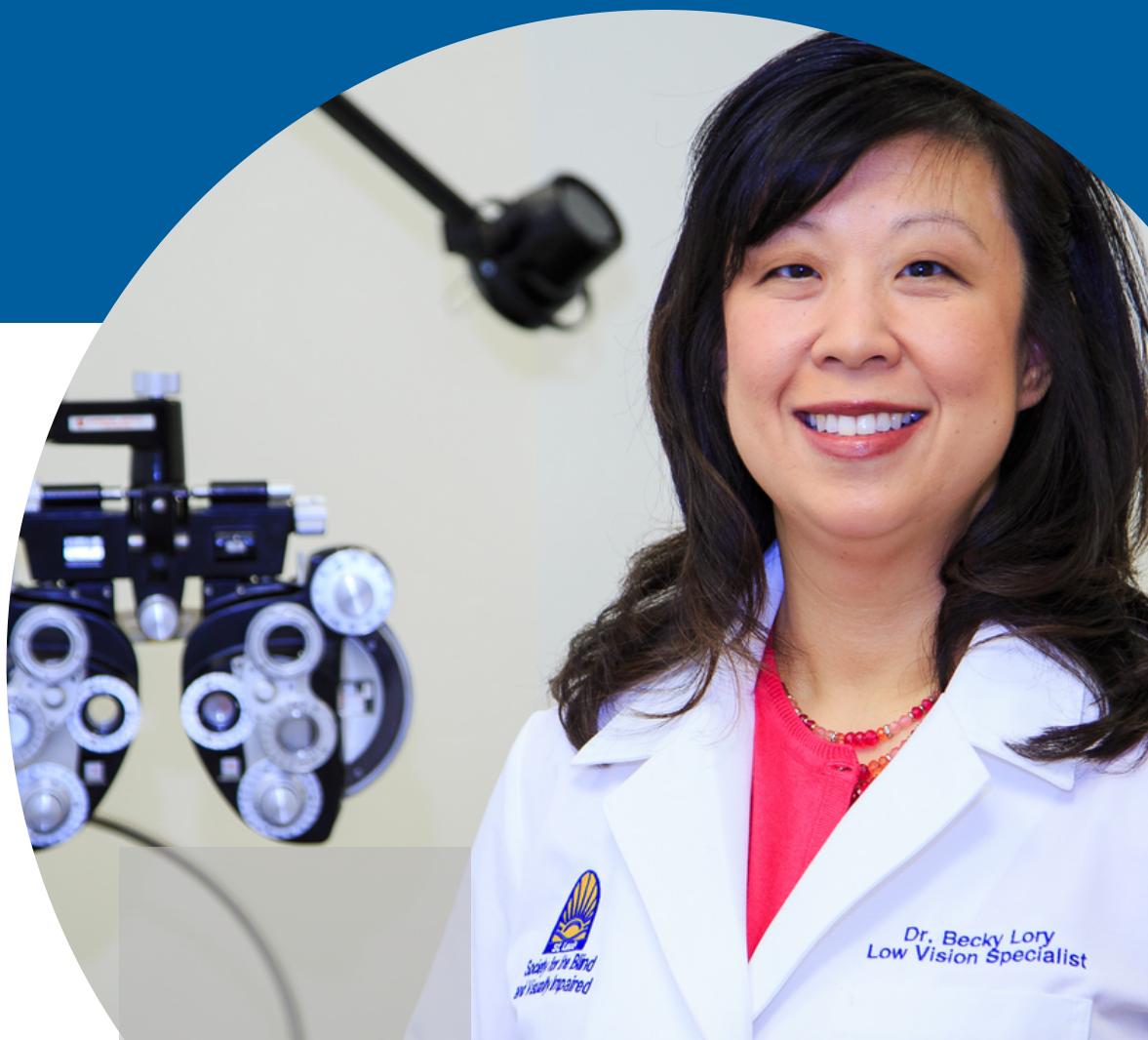




IMPACT REPORT 2019

Society for the Blind
and Visually Impaired

*A Year of Transition
and Growth*



A YEAR OF TRANSITION AND GROWTH



Laura Park-Leach



Mike McKinnis

We are honored to provide you with the Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired's Impact Report for 2019.

Formed in 1911, the Society has been providing comprehensive services to people who are living with vision loss for 109 years. Over the previous year, many community and agency leaders, staff, donors, and volunteers have brought the Society to where it is today and, for their tireless efforts, we are deeply grateful. Just a short year ago, the Board welcomed the 11th President to lead the agency in its next period of growth and innovation.

Building on a long, rich history serving Saint Louis and surrounding counties, 2019 brought opportunities for reimagining client services. A bold, new marketing strategy was introduced including the development of a contemporary website, expanded social media engagement and new communication tools to reach clients. To achieve a critical, strategic goal to “increase the number of clients served in our community”, the first meeting of the Minority Advisory Board was called to order in the fall.

In this report, you will read client stories which demonstrate the true impact of our work. Dignity and respect for each person and their unique goals is our primary objective. We listen to clients and patients explain their needs and, together, we collaborate to create achievable goals to improve the quality of their lives.

As we look ahead to 2020, the Board and staff are eager to introduce Remote Workshops and Support Groups and expanded in-house Activities of Daily Living training. We have instituted an Accessible Technology Center, a Falls Prevention Room, and an Aids and Appliances Store. The improvements are designed to provide quality service and support. With the assistance of all our community partners, including you, these innovations and others to come will continue to provide the most relevant and life-altering services available!

Laura Park-Leach

Laura Park-Leach, President & CEO

Mike McKinnis

Mike McKinnis, Board Chair

OUR MISSION

The Society enhances independence, empowers individuals, and enriches the lives of people who are visually impaired or blind.

SPECIALTY SERVICES

- Assistive Technology
- Children's Services
- Low Vision Medical Exams
- Low Vision Therapy
- Orientation and Mobility
- Recreation
- Social Work
- Transportation
- Vision Rehabilitation Therapy



Washington University Delta Gamma Sorority facilitating a weekly exercise class



Society clients help train St. Louis Art Museum Docents



Client, Carol using her white cane to assist with mobility

ENHANCING COMMUNICATION



Sister Mary P. using her iPhone to assist her with Orientation and Mobility

Sister Mary Jacqueline recently turned 83, but she hasn't let her age or glaucoma keep her from her life's mission, which is offering spiritual guidance to people in need. "I'm grateful to the Society for giving me the technology that helps me communicate."

In 1993, Sister Mary learned to use a computer. Fifteen years later, she could only see the screen out of the sides of her eyes. The Society provided her with a CCTV. "I used that until I couldn't make the text large enough to see anymore," she said. Klaus Mittelstadt, a society employee, came to her home to show her how JAWS computer screen-reading software worked. "Klaus was very patient," she said. "He told me he loved to come anytime because I always had good questions to ask him. Last week he showed me how to use accessible features on my iPhone. It's wonderful."

Sister Mary believes in the power of connection through communication. "I visit a Sister whose vision is perfect, but she is totally deaf," she said. "A sighted person comes with me to type what I'm saying on her tablet and she reads it."

"Later, I realized I could sync my bluetooth keyboard with her tablet. She was thrilled! Now we have private visits, and it's deepened our connection. It's such a joy to break through that isolation."

Through her work as a spiritual advisor, Sister Mary comes in contact with people who are losing their vision. "I always tell them about the Society. It's been a life-saver for me. It's such a wonderful resource. They've given me the tools I need to communicate."

"It's such a joy to break through that isolation."

EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS

By the time Sherrell was diagnosed with glaucoma at 25, she had already lost most of the vision in her left eye. She had surgery to slow the loss of vision in her right eye. But 17 years later, she began finding it hard to drive in the rain, and realized she was losing her peripheral vision. She decided it was time to stop driving altogether.

"I contacted the Society," Sherrell said, "and they sent an Occupational Therapist to my house who showed me techniques to help me maintain my home. But I really wasn't ready for more services."

After having another eye surgery in May of this year, Sherrell found herself getting depressed. "Losing my vision was affecting my daily life. I wanted to snap out of my depression." She attended a Support Group meeting at the Society (now available through Zoom and conference calls), and it gave her a different perspective. "There were people there in the same predicament as I was in – people my age and older. It really helped me a lot."

The Society came to Sherrell's home again and this time put raised bumps on the dials of her washing machine, treadmill, and elliptical machines. "I try to stay fit and healthy. I don't want to lose my mobility," she said. Sherrell was very unsure about going up and down steps, and she was afraid of escalators. She decided to get Orientation and Mobility training and learn to use a white cane. The white cane helped Sherrell by allowing her to scan her surroundings for obstacles or orientation marks while moving about.

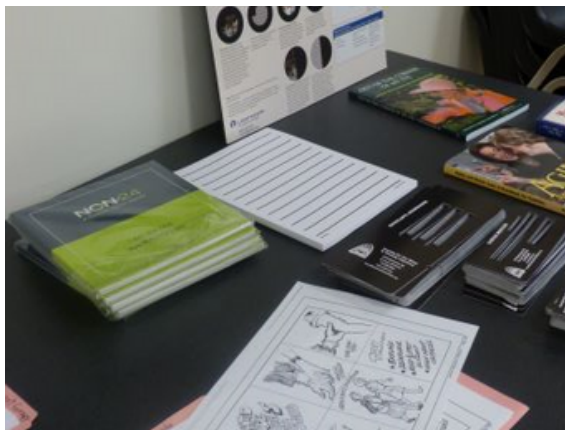
Sherrell is grateful to have strong family support. She and her husband have six children between the ages of 12 and 25, as well as four grandchildren. "They give me strength," she said.

Surrounded by the love of her family, and support from the Society, she has a lot to look forward to. "I'm so grateful to the Society for helping me get my confidence back," she said. "I don't know where I'd be without them."

**"Now, I got my confidence back!"
she said. "I feel more independent."**



A phoropter used
in the Drews Low
Vision Clinic



Some of the tools that can be used
by those with low vision



Alana paying a bill using her CCTV

ENRICHING THE PATH TO INDEPENDENCE

After 33 years teaching sixth graders, Alana was looking forward to an easy retirement. The 75-year-old wears hearing aids and has bouts of arthritis, but she has been making the best of it. Lately, however, she's also been having problems with her vision, and she's grateful for the help she's receiving from the Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Alana recently underwent successful cataract surgeries. "It was great!" she said. "I could see both distance and reading." Everything was fine until a few months ago when she began having trouble reading text. A retina specialist informed her that she had the beginning stages of both macular degeneration and glaucoma, and he encouraged her to contact the Society.

The Society's Low Vision Clinic assessed her needs and suggested a video magnifier (CCTV). "I rented one to see if it would work for me, and it does!" Alana said. "Now I can read text. I can write checks and pay my bills." She's delighted to learn that if she wants to purchase the CCTV, the money she's already paid in rent will offset the cost.

"I had someone build a little table for the CCTV," Alana said. "I'm 5'1, and now I can use it at a height that's right for me. I also got a surge protector with a long cord, so I can move it between my kitchen and family room."

She's glad the Society is there to give her the support, guidance, tools, and training she needs today and will need in the future. The Society will help her continue to adjust to losing her vision, and will show her a path toward maintaining independence.

**"Now I can read text. I can write checks and pay
my bills."**

SOCIETY WELCOMES A NEW PRESIDENT



Laura Park-Leach with
David C. Ekin, Roxann
Mayros, and Mark Leach

After 25 years as President and CEO of the Society and over 35 years in the field of low vision and blindness, David Ekin retired in August 2019. Under his strong leadership, the organization's budget increased from \$400,000 to \$2 million.

Ekin introduced the agency's first development program to address the need for more diverse funding sources that included individual major and annual giving, events, facilitating a more robust foundation & corporate grants program, and hiring the first professional staff in the Development Department. "It has been an honor to serve under Dave's leadership on the Board of Directors," said past Board Chairman Greg Levine, President Nidec Motor Corporation, Motion Control. "With Dave's gentle, but focused leadership style he successfully led the Society through multiple strategic plans, maintained services through the great recession, and celebrated the Society's amazing 100 year anniversary with the St. Louis Community.

After a nationwide search, the Board of Directors appointed Mrs. Laura Park-Leach as the President and CEO. Park-Leach came to Society with 30 years of experience in executive leadership. In her previous role Senior Vice-President for the Metrolina Association for the Blind, in Charlotte, NC, she supervised a team of optometrists, occupational therapists, low vision therapists, vision rehabilitation therapists, orientation and mobility specialists, social workers and support personnel who served over 1700 clients her last year with the organization. She also managed the organization's contributed revenue and marketing efforts which raised almost \$1.5 million.

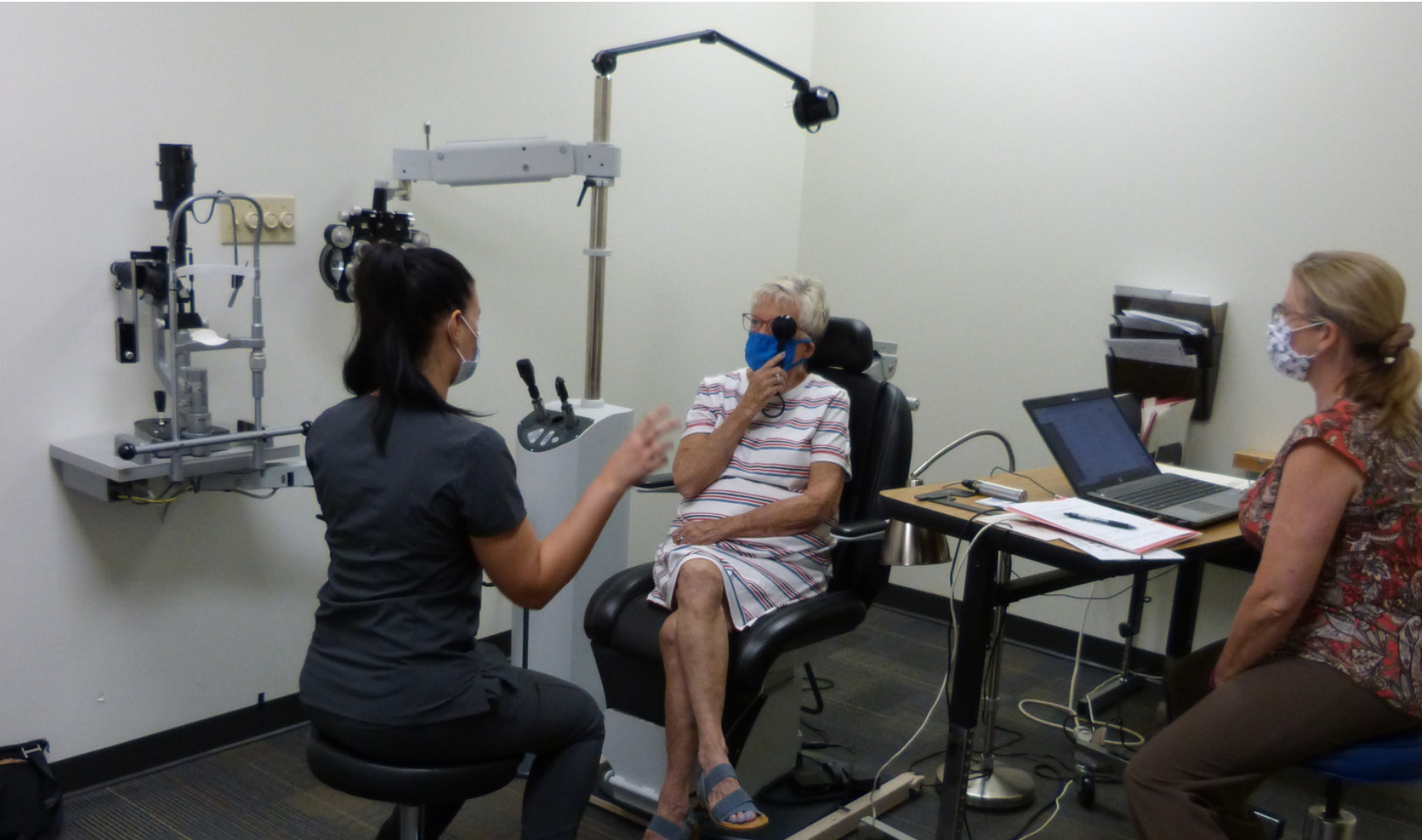
"David Ekin has had a distinguished career, not only in St. Louis, but nationally, and I am honored to be his successor," Park-Leach said. "I am looking forward to working with the Society staff and Board to respond to the developing trends in service innovation that may be required to serve the organizations mission and growing client base."

She believes that technology is transforming vision rehabilitation services. It provides assistance with daily life. People are able to access information on phones and computers in order to stay connected with friends, family and the community. There are hundreds of apps on cellular devices which help people to do such things as stay oriented to their surroundings as they travel, read labels on food products and serve as a money reader.

"We are very pleased to have Laura Park-Leach join the Society as it's new president," said Board Chair Mike McKinnis. "She is extremely well qualified and has spent many years in an executive capacity serving the blind and visually impaired. We are confident that she will do a great job for the Society and look forward to working with her."

SOCIETY MILESTONES

Since 1911 the Society has impacted the lives of blind and visually impaired people, and we are proud to have that strong history. In 2019, the Society broadened its goals to reach more clients.



**Number of Clients
Served**

1174

Hours of Direct Service

3088

PERCENT OF CLIENTS MEETING GOALS

Low Vision Clinic
Medical Exams

95%

Vision Rehabilitation Therapy

92%

Orientation and
Mobility

74%

Decreased Risk of Senior Falls

70%





President, Laura Park-Leach
welcoming clients to the
2019 Holiday Party



The Leslie & Robert Drews Low Vision Clinic



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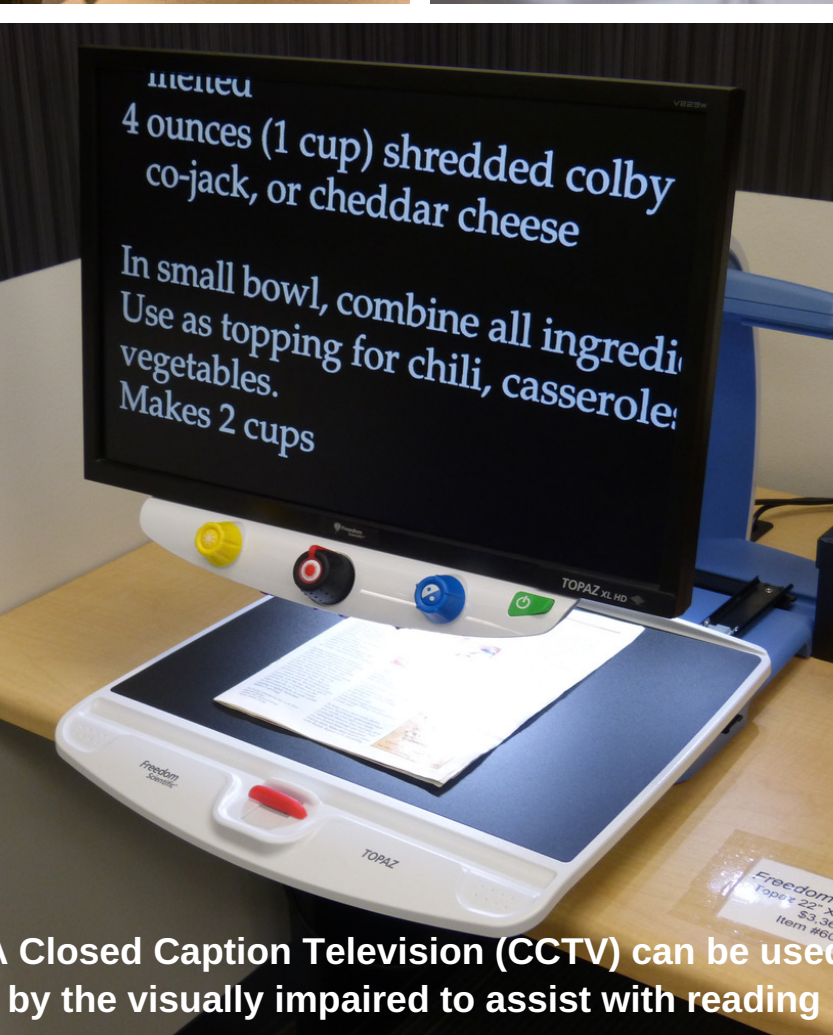
Laura Park-Leach poses with members of Boy Scouts of America,
St. Louis area Council



Society clients enjoying the 2019 Holiday Party



Clients enjoy creating a festive
decoration at the Annual Holiday
Party





Brenda W., Director of Adult Services, gives Washington University Ophthalmology Residents a tour of the Drews Low Vision Clinic



A blind skier, Bill J., presenting at a Lunch & Learn



Shawn C. sees his wife for the first time in many years using the Iris Vision, a wearable technology device



Nearly 200 guests enjoy the cocktail hour at the 2019 Visionary Gala hosted at The Palladium St. Louis



Dr. Humeyra
Karacal & Drs. Jim
& Nanci Bobrow



Mary Hale received the Volunteer of the Year Award at the 2019 Visionary Gala



A place setting at the 2019 Guess the Grape Blind Wine Tasting & Food Pairing



Just a few of the aids and appliances available at Society



Silk Pajamas provided music during the 2019 Gala



The silent auction table at the 2019 Guess The Grape Blind Wine Tasting & Food Pairing



John Ammann receives advocate of the year award during the 2019 Gala



Brenda W. and Julie A. reviewing the large button phones available at Society



The Society's 2019 Guess the Grape Blind Wine Tasting & Food Pairing was held October 19, 2019, at Beyond Broadway.

A blind tasting is a wine tasting arranged so that the people assessing the wines do not know what the wines they are tasting until after they taste them.

Following a champagne reception, three flights of two different wines were paired with a chef's special selection, four course meal. Certified Sommeliers, Mike Ward of Ward on Wine, and Dave Birkenmeier of Schnucks, lead guests through the tasting to both educate and help guests determine which wines they enjoy most. Special thanks go to Schnucks, our Wine Sponsor, for helping provide all the wine for this one-of-a-kind evening.

A small live and silent auction featuring sports memorabilia, one-of-a-kind travel experiences, jewelry and more, helped generate over \$15,000 to support the Society's programs which empower and enrich over 1,000 adults and children with visual impairments each year.

Event Chairs Kerrie Troutman and Rebecca Spec-Jones said, "This fun filled, one-of-a-kind evening was an enjoyable, educational, and humbling event which were proud to chair."

Sommelier Sponsors

Drs. Nanci and James Bobrow
Ms. Juanita Hinshaw
Lighthouse for the Blind-St.
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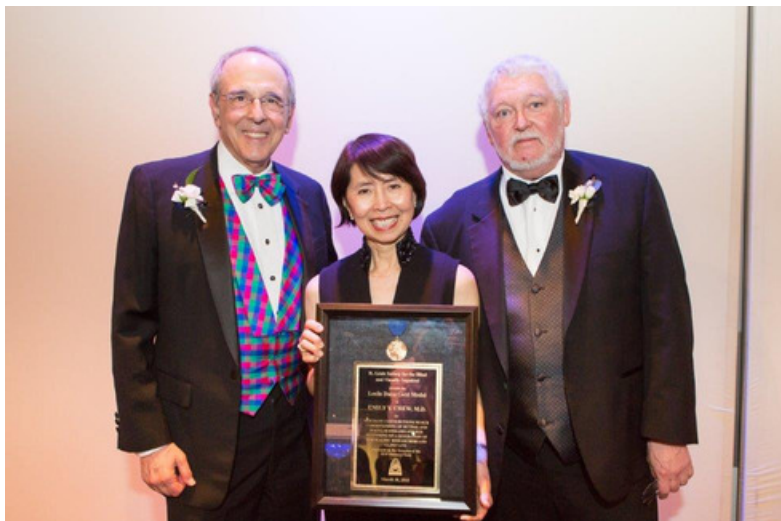
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Ms. Elizabeth Kauffman
Ophthalmology Consultants
Dr. & Mrs. Paul Tesser

VISIONARY GALA



Dr. James Bobrow, Leslie Dana Gold Medal Honoree, Dr. Emily Chew, and David Ekin

The Society's 2019 Visionary Gala was held Saturday, April 22, 2019, at the Palladium St. Louis. Drs. Nanci and James Bobrow served as Honorary Chairs for the evening.

Dr. Emily Y. Chew received the Leslie Dana Gold Medal. The Leslie Dana Gold Medal, established in 1925, was named for the late Mr. Leslie Dana of St. Louis. The medal is awarded based on long meritorious service for the conservation of eyesight research and instruction in ophthalmology, social service for the control of eye diseases, or special discoveries in the domain of general science or medicine of exceptional importance in conservation of vision. As the Director of the Division of Epidemiology and Clinical Applications and the Deputy Clinical Director at the National Eye Institute (NEI), National Institutes of Health (NIH), Dr. Chew directs the Medical Retina Program the NEI. Dr. Chew is the study chair for the Age-Related Eye Disease Study 2 that is investigating the use of lutein/zeaxanthin (found in leafy greens such as kale) and/or omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids as treatment for age-related macular degeneration and cataracts, two of the most common forms of blindness in the United States.

The James Butler Award was presented to David C. Ekin for his work in the vision loss field, and 25 years with the Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Advocate of the Year, John J. Ammann of St. Louis University's Litigation Clinic was honored for his pro bono work on the Blind Pension Fund Case. After 12 years, the Missouri Social Services Department agreed to pay \$21 million from a special settlement fund to Missourians who are blind thanks in large part to the work of Mr. Ammann.

The Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Mary Hale. Ms. Hale, who is deaf and blind, is involved with the Society, and has worked on the local, state, and national level advocating and developing support services for dual sensory impaired individuals.

LEADERS WHO PURSUE EXCELLENCE



Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Brooks

The Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired depends upon the generous support of community members who believe in our mission and our clients. We believe the leaders in our community help change the world.

Gerald Brooks is one such leader who is the epitome of our values. For twenty-five years, he has been a constant for the Society, and

we are proud to have him, as well as our entire Board, working to help create a community where vision loss is not a barrier to a full life.

In the fall of 2019, the Board of Directors introduced bold, new approaches for the Society moving forward. One of those new ventures was the creation of a Minority Advisory Board, chaired by Mr. Brooks. This Board was established to increase awareness of our services among the minority populations in the St. Louis Metropolitan Area.

Mr. Brooks' involvement is far reaching, from serving on the Board of Directors to providing generous financial contributions. Leaders like him show true dedication to our mission, vision, and values.

He is a regular attendee to our annual fundraising events, **Guess the Grape** and **The Visionary Gala**. "These are important events, where everyone gets together in a lighthearted manner, but you can tell the focus is always on the mission of the Society," said Mr. Brooks.

When asked why he continues to serve and give, Mr. Brooks responded, "The staff and leadership display dedication to the people we serve every day. Their drive to empower others is handled with care and respect."

To change the world, leaders must get involved. They put themselves in our client's shoes to the best of their ability, adhere to the mission, and plan extensively. Their influence radiates into the community and inspires others. Mr. Brooks does just that.

As the Society continues to further our commitment, we do so in the spirit of togetherness. We are grateful for your collaboration and your support, which have a profound impact on our client's lives.

Leadership 2019

Board of Directors

Officers

Mike McKinnis
Chair
Tom Enger
Vice Chair
Ryan Whittington
Treasurer
Elizabeth Kauffman
Secretary
Joseph Brinker
Assistant Treasurer
Midge Crider
Assistant Secretary

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Alice Conway
Michael P. Croghan
Mike Donahoe, MD
Robert Feibel, MD
Ron Hamp
Larry Hickman
Juanita Hinshaw
Chris Pickel
Linda Rose
Rebecca Sepac-Jones
Paul Tesser, MD, PhD
Kerrie Caldwell-Troutman

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Marshall Hier
John J. Purcell, Jr., MD

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James C. Bobrow, MD
Sophia M Chung, MD
Sabra Engelbrecht
Gregory Levine
Ann Shapiro
Nichole Wren

Minority Advisory Board

Bola Akande
Gerald Brooks
Ken Franklin
Gary Watkins, M.D.

President and CEO

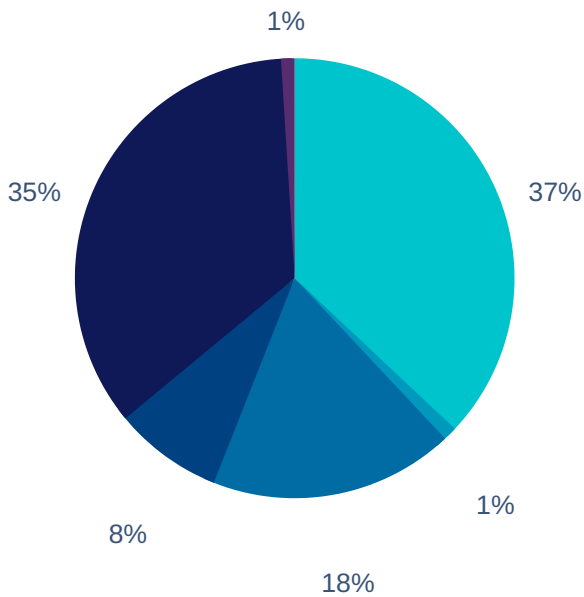
Laura Park-Leach
David Ekin - Retired August 2019

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Kate Boland, OD
Linda Barbier Bularzik
Barbara Clover
Naomi Franzblau
Tre' Heigham
Kendra Hjorth
Peggy Johnson
Debbie Leonard
Becky Lory, OD
Erin Mason
Christy McCutcheon
Susan Meissel
Klaus Mittelstadt
Anne Murphy
Diane Schulte
Melody Simmons
Daniel Skender
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Joyce Strother
Maria Tegtmeyer
Brenda Wendling

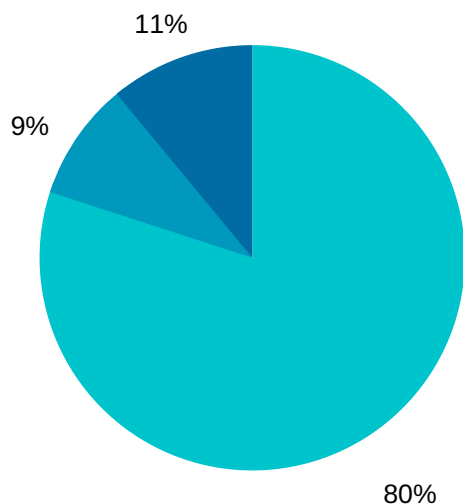
SOCIETY FINANCIALS

YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2019



Operating Revenue & Support **\$1,896,034**

37% Management and General ---	\$699,925
1% Assistive Technology -----	\$14,054
18% Low Vision Clinic -----	\$337,045
8% Special Education -----	\$152,096
35% Fundraising -----	\$659,741
1% Vision Rehabilitation Therapy	\$21,863



Operating Expenses **\$1,803,790**

80% Programs -----	\$1,516,827
11% Management and General ---	\$208,564
9% Fundraising -----	\$170,643

The Society returns all positive financial outcomes to the organization to better serve people with vision loss. These resources help retain quality staff, help grow core services and help introduce new services.

DONOR RECOGNITION

Thank you for building a community where vision loss is not a barrier to a full life. Every single gift matters to us, and most importantly to our clients. We are honored to recognize those who have made contributions at the \$250 level and above. We do our best to ensure the donor list is accurate.

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Mr. Brian Landon
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Patient Ken Tabb and his Family.

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Donors and friends during the 2019 Gala.

Tribute Donations

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In Honor of Betty Bolt

Mr. & Mrs. Leonard Fullenkamp

In Honor of Linda Bularzik

Miss Antoinette Berta

In Honor of Sophia Chung

Ms. Wendy Bell

Ms. Marguerite M. Bliss

Mr. & Mrs. Robert E. Ferguson

Jane Goldmuntz Grady

Mr. & Mrs. Fletcher Lane

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Drs. David & Christina Walden

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Ms. Lynn Rodway

In Honor of June Cooper

Mr. Gary Cooper

In Honor of David Ekin

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Miss Alice J. Brown

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In Memory of Cecelia R. Campbell

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In Memory of Charl, Rickie, Rich & Pat

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