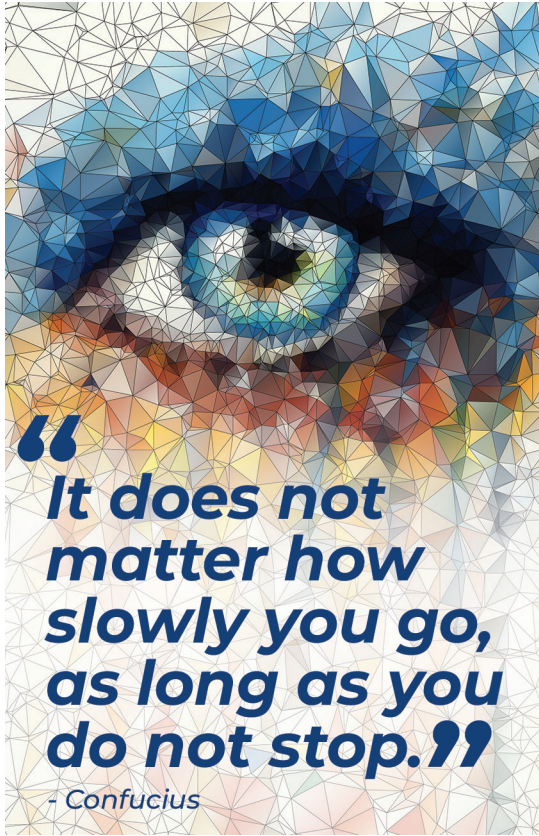




THE EYE OPENER

WINTER 2023



“
**It does not
matter how
slowly you go,
as long as you
do not stop.**”

- Confucius

People are often surprised to know an eye exam can be an early detection system for serious illnesses such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and diabetes. And that for young children, many vision problems begin at an early age, and with vision playing an important role in childhood development, uncorrected vision issues may significantly affect a child's ability to learn and reach their highest potential.

Simply put, routine eye care, beginning in infancy, is a critical investment in vision health and overall health. But for many in our region it is beyond reach. Many in our community live with vision problems that jeopardize their safety and success because they are faced with higher day-to-day priorities such as housing and food, illness, disability, or conflicts, and simply cannot afford to see a doctor.

Last year, when we rebranded to LifeSight, our mission statement, “Vision for a Lifetime,” was changed to “Vision. For All. For Life.” Our goal is to advance eye care so all in our community have access to care throughout their lifetime.



LIFE SIGHT
Vision. For All. For Life.

We know this is a bold aspiration. It means placing greater programmatic focus on the issue, increasing stakeholders and collaborators, and expanding and expending resources. We know it will not be easy but believe, if we continue to put in the work and inspire others with our passion, it does not matter how slow the process, as long as we do not stop, it is possible.

Through our research, conducted with volunteer student researchers at the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine, we are acquiring a greater understanding of how the determinants of health support engaging the entire community in our efforts. We have learned visual impairment affects individuals of all ages, race, and socioeconomic standing, but is disproportionately detrimental to individuals with limited access to care. Research shows compromised vision has social and economic implications not only for the individuals themselves, but their communities and healthcare systems.

Through programs like VisionCARE and Gift of Sight, we continually work toward solutions. VisionCARE, facilitated through a collaboration with Complete Health (formerly Community Health Care Center of the Black Hills) and area network providers, has underwritten no-cost eye exams and glasses for nearly 150 people. Gift of Sight, provided in association with area optometrists and ophthalmologists, has gifted 100+ sight-saving surgeries, mainly cataract, to medically underserved individuals with no other means to receive this essential care.

We remain passionate about children's eye health, and through the KidsFIRST free vision screening program, protect young children's eyes and developing vision. Working in cooperation with area elementary schools and child care centers, KidsFIRST has administered upwards of 60,000 free children's vision screenings with an average of 14% of children screened identified with otherwise undetected vision disorders and referred to an optometrist or ophthalmologist for additional eye care.

To ensure eye care for future generations, the Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman Memorial Scholarship Endowment at the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine provides annual scholarships to medical students pursuing ophthalmology, who hope to return to South Dakota to practice.

This outreach is mission critical to creating the pathway for Vision. For All. For Life. We hope you will join us in our pursuit. We welcome the opportunity to connect with you to gather your thoughts and insights, and we ask you to please give generously to support our cause.

***LifeSight exists to
protect and preserve
vision, restore sight,
and support
eye-related research
to promote
eye health for all.***

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SEASON'S GREETINGS!

As the end of the year approaches, I find myself thinking about my work at LifeSight and feeling thankful for having the privilege of serving as its Executive Director for almost 15 years. Whether it has been collaborating with the Board, staff, community partners, or donors, I feel extremely fortunate to serve this organization and work side by side with such a knowledgeable and compassionate Board of Directors.



Jack Kaup

Even more inspiring is the energy and dedication of each of our Board members and the life-changing work we can do because of their leadership. We are so very grateful to each and every member for saying yes to serving on our Board.

At the end of this year, a longtime Board member, **Jack Kaup**, steps down after nine years of service due to term limits. Jack joined the Board in 2015 and, in addition to his involvement on the Board, was appointed to our Finance Committee where he shared his expertise in healthcare and finances and analytical ability to ensure our organization is operating with the financial resources it needs to provide programs and services to our community. By the numbers,

during his tenure Jack's leadership assisted in the design of nine annual budgets, a like number of annual audits, three strategic plans, and an organization rebrand. Jack's know-how and advice will be greatly missed.

Please accept our deepest gratitude, Jack, for your dedicated leadership in guiding the mission, and future, of LifeSight.

In closing and in the same spirit of appreciation, I want to say thank you to one and all for your belief in the work we do, the way you allow us to serve our community, and share, as we turn the page on another year, that in the new year, we will be ready to do even more.



Ronda Gusinsky

For all who read this, we carry you in our hearts throughout the holiday season and into the New Year, wishing you peace, continued health, and ever present moments of joy.

Ronda Gusinsky
Executive Director
LifeSight

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS...

New board members bring new ideas, connections, and energy, and we are excited to announce two new members will be joining the LifeSight Board of Directors in January: Dr. Michael daSilva, Ophthalmologist at Black Hills Regional Eye Institute, and Kurt Solay, Partner at Nooney & Solay, LLP.



Dr. Michael daSilva

Dr. Michael daSilva is a cataract and refractive surgeon at the Black Hills Regional Eye Institute. He grew up in Bismarck, North Dakota, before attending the University of Nebraska for undergraduate and medical school. After an internal medicine internship with the University of South Dakota, he completed ophthalmology residency at the Stein Eye Institute at the University of California - Los Angeles.



Kurt Solay

Kurt Solay is a native of Parkston, South Dakota. He is a senior partner at Nooney & Solay, LLP, in Rapid City, South Dakota. Kurt's practice focuses on business, real estate, trusts, estate planning, and probate administration. Kurt is very active in the community, whether through sponsorship or direct participation, and supports various nonprofits. He is a graduate of the University of South Dakota, obtained his J.D. from the University of Kansas School of Law, and a Masters Degree in Taxation from New York University School of Law.

Michael and Kurt, we are excited to welcome you, grateful for your willingness to serve, and very much look forward to working with you to promote the mission of LifeSight.

Support our mission. ☐ **YES!** I want to support the vision-inspired outreach of LifeSight.

NAME: _____ PHONE: (____) _____ ☐ Cell ☐ Home ☐ Work

ADDRESS: _____ (Street or PO Box) (City) (State) (ZIP) EMAIL: _____

I WANT TO DONATE: \$ _____ ☐ My Check is Enclosed ☐ Contact Me at the Number Above For My Credit Card Information

After completing this form, please place form, along with your check, if applicable, in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. Postage required.

Thank you for your generous support of our cause.

LifeSight is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Your gift is tax deductible as allowed by the IRS. LifeSight may acknowledge donors in public relations materials unless donor requests to remain anonymous.

NEWS BRIEFS

2023 YFS KIDS FAIR – Since 2013, LifeSight has made KidsFIRST free children's vision screenings available to families and advocated for children's vision care at the annual YFS Kids Fair. This year, almost 500 free vision screenings were administered to children aged 6 months through 5th grade, of which 15.46% had



risk factors detected that required referral for a complete eye exam. Our thanks to an awesome group of volunteers, including students from University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine and LifeSight Board members, for supporting this effort, and to Monument Health, the sponsor of the sunglasses given to children receiving a screening.



2023 SCHOLARSHIP AWARD – We are excited to congratulate Marlee Jones, the 2023 recipient of the LifeSight Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman Memorial Scholarship awarded through an endowment at the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine. Marlee grew up in Groton, South Dakota, and has aspired to go into ophthalmology since high school. As a member of the Class of 2024, she is looking forward to applying for residency and making a difference as a future physician.

THANK YOU KIDSFIRST VOLUNTEERS – We are most grateful to the wonderful KidsFIRST program volunteers who have dedicated up to 500+ hours a year for over a decade to assist LifeSight in administering free children's vision screenings. **We celebrated this fantastic group in September at our annual Volunteer Picnic and were excited to congratulate Dick Fischer as Volunteer of the Year and Keith and Wendy Clanton as Volunteer Couple of the Year.**



Dick has been the Volunteer of the Year award recipient for nine out of the past ten years and Keith and Wendy the Volunteer Couple of the Year for five of the past ten years. Thank you to this amazing group with huge hearts for volunteerism!

CELEBRATING THE GIFT OF SIGHT – Gift of Sight provides sight-saving surgeries to adults with severely impaired vision who otherwise could not receive care. As this newsletter goes to print, LifeSight's 100th Gift of Sight surgery is being performed –



and we are celebrating giving recipients the chance to regain their vision, and most importantly, independence and livelihood. Gift of Sight referrals come from area ophthalmologists and optometrists who are our valued program partners. **Pictured is recent Gift of Sight recipient, Aaron Lischefska, with surgeon, Dr. Stephen Khachikian, and referring optometrist, Dr. Ryan Scarborough, of Black Hills Regional Eye Institute. We would also like to acknowledge Dakota Lions Sight & Health for their recent partnership to support Gift of Sight surgeries.**

CASINO ROYALE

A "PARTY WITH A PURPOSE"



This year's September 30th Casino Royale Charity Affair celebrated the eleventh year of LifeSight's annual "Party with a Purpose." Aptly named, proceeds from Casino Royale support program resources to facilitate upwards of 7,500 KidsFIRST free children's vision screenings annually to identify children with undetected vision disorders and underwrite VisionCARE eye exams and glasses and Gift of Sight cataract surgeries that were provided at no cost to nearly a combined 100+ program recipients this year to preserve and restore vision for those medically underserved individuals across our community with no other means to receive this essential care.

This celebration is possible thanks to the Casino Royale guests, sponsors, promotional partners, volunteers, and auction and event donors, who provide the means for us to change lives for the better through their support of the essential vision outreach LifeSight brings to young and old across the region.

Special thanks to Helene Duhamel of the Pennington County Sheriff's Office and JD Hewitt of Hewitt Land Company for joining us for the festivities as emcee and auctioneer, respectively!

We look forward to having you join us when we "Party with a Purpose" next year at the 12th Annual Casino Royale Charity Affair on September 28, 2024, at the Hilton Garden Inn Rapid City!





With Deepest Appreciation to **Our Donors**

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