



# THE EYEOPENER

## WINTER 2025

## VISION. FOR ALL. FOR LIFE.

LifeSight is about helping people see well to live well – for a lifetime. Our mission is simple yet powerful: **Vision. For All. For Life.** We believe the ability to see is fundamental and everyone should have access to the eye care they need, regardless of their circumstances.



Our origins go back to the founding of the Black Hills Regional Eye Institute, when in 1987, a supporting nonprofit was formed to enhance the Institute's education and research missions. This organization is now known as LifeSight.

Today, we continue to advance these missions. We also provide vision outreach in partnership with eye care professionals and community organizations. Our advocacy focuses on the needs of children and medically underserved adults who lack access to routine eye care.

As 2025 draws to a close, we want to pause to shine a spotlight on the difference our work has made across our community:

**70,000+ KidsFIRST Free Vision Screenings.** Helping people see well throughout their lifetime starts with protecting little eyes. Because sight is essential to a child's learning, development, and quality of life, early detection of vision problems is critical. Through our KidsFIRST program, we deliver free screenings to thousands of children each year – ensuring early detection of vision problems and connecting families to the care they need to protect young eyes from long-term vision loss.

**10,500 KidsFIRST Referrals.** When vision risk factors are detected through a KidsFIRST screening, children are referred to eye doctors for comprehensive care. Most may only need glasses. Some require vision therapy. In rare cases, we have helped diagnose serious conditions, such as pediatric cataracts. Early referral is critical. If left untreated, these conditions could lead to permanent vision loss or even blindness.

**118 Gift of Sight Surgeries.** Through Gift of Sight, underserved adults with severely impaired vision recover not only their eyesight but restored independence. Each story is a

powerful reminder of how essential vision is for everyday life – working, driving, caring for family, and sustaining community. Without access to surgery, eye injuries or conditions like rapidly advancing cataracts can steal both sight and livelihood in just a few short months. With Gift of Sight, lives are renewed with clear vision and the hope of a brighter future.

**200 VisionCARE No-Cost Eye Exams & Glasses.** For adults with poor vision, everyday tasks like driving, work assignments, or navigating a store while shopping can become daunting – or even unsafe. A simple eye exam and a pair of prescription glasses can change everything. Yet many low-income adults lack access to basic eye care. Through VisionCARE, LifeSight partners with local providers to deliver free eye exams and glasses to underserved adults – renewing sight and the ability to live securely and self-sufficiently.

**13 Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman Memorial Scholarships.** Begun in 2013 through a partnership with the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine, the scholarship is awarded to fourth-year medical students committed to ophthalmology – many of whom have returned post-residency to practice in our South Dakota communities.

**7 research studies.** Since 2014, LifeSight has partnered with medical students to study children's vision and rural eye care needs. Through these collaborations, seven manuscripts have been published in peer-reviewed medical journals such as *Ophthalmic Epidemiology*, *South Dakota Medicine*, and *Aesculapius Journal*.

You play a critical role – and make a lasting impact – in safeguarding access to eye care for all in our community. Every gift helps ensure that no one goes without the care they need. **Give sight. Restore hope. Please donate today at [LifeSightSD.org](https://LifeSightSD.org).**

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

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[LifeSightSD.org](https://LifeSightSD.org)

# CELEBRATING LEADERSHIP & LEGACY.



**Dr. Rebecca Linquist**

A nonprofit's Board of Directors provides vision, guidance, and accountability to keep its mission strong. Board members shape strategy, safeguard resources, and serve as ambassadors in the community. When those leaders bring expertise and passion, they empower an organization to grow and make a lasting impact.

LifeSight has been blessed with such leadership. At the end of this month, two longtime Board Members – Dr. Rebecca Linquist and Dr. Sarah Kuipers – will conclude their service on our Board due to term limits. For nearly a decade, both have offered steadfast leadership, helping build a legacy of vital community outreach.

Moments like these remind us how deeply board service matters. Rebecca and Sarah's

thoughtful guidance has been a source of strength and inspiration, shaping a renewed path for LifeSight's mission. While their official terms are ending, we are sincerely grateful both will continue to share their wisdom and remain engaged in meaningful ways.

As we bring 2025 to a close, we honor and celebrate their extraordinary contributions to our mission, extend our deepest gratitude for the passion, vision, and unwavering dedication they have so generously shared to strengthen and advance our cause, and look forward to the blessing of their continued insight and enduring friendship.

On behalf of the LifeSight Board of Directors and Staff, we wish you good cheer this holiday season and health, happiness, and prosperity in the New Year.

*Ronda*

**Ronda Gusinsky**  
Executive Director



**Ronda Gusinsky**



**Dr. Sarah Kuipers**

## WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS...

Fresh leadership brings fresh perspective. New board members contribute innovative ideas, valuable connections, and renewed energy that strengthen our mission. We are delighted to share that two outstanding individuals will join the LifeSight Board of Directors this January, further enriching our vision and impact: **Dr. Hadley "Carson" Eisenbeisz and Sacha Farley.**

**Dr. Hadley "Carson" Eisenbeisz is a comprehensive ophthalmologist at Rapid City Medical Center, focused on protecting and improving vision through advanced care.**

Raised in Pierre and inspired by his childhood eye doctor, he earned his undergraduate degree at South Dakota State University before attending the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine and completing his ophthalmology residency at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Carson is dedicated to combining cutting-edge surgical techniques with compassionate, patient-focused care. He extended his expertise globally by delivering eye care in Ghana and Northern India, reflecting his commitment to service, stewardship, and improving quality of life through better vision.



**Dr. Hadley  
"Carson" Eisenbeisz**

**Sacha Farley is a seasoned leader in the optical industry with over 20 years' experience at Walmart.**

Beginning her career with the company in Fargo in 2000, she joined the Optical Division in 2002 and quickly distinguished herself as a dedicated and knowledgeable optician. After helping launch the Walmart Supercenter in Spearfish in 2004, she advanced through multiple roles including optician and optical manager. Today, Sacha serves as a Vision Center Development Coach, supporting centers across North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska. Known for her passion for patient care, team development, and operational excellence, she is a respected leader and valued asset to the Walmart Optical Division.



**Sacha Farley**

**Carson and Sacha, we are thrilled to welcome you, deeply grateful for your commitment to serve, and eager to work alongside you in advancing LifeSight's mission.**

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

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Cell ☐ Home ☐ Work

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**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

**GIFT OF SIGHT** | LifeSight, along with area ophthalmologists and optometrists and program partner, Dakota Lions Sight & Health, provides sight-restoring surgeries to low-income adults with severely impaired vision who would otherwise go without care. 118 Gift of Sight surgeries have been performed to date, helping recipients regain not only their vision but also their independence and livelihood. **Pictured is ophthalmologist Dr. Rebecca Linquist,**



**The Eye Doctors at Rapid City Medical Center, and recent Gift of Sight recipient, Ruth Daum,** whose advancing cataracts threatened both her sight and ability to continue working. Thanks to Gift of Sight, Ruth received life changing surgery and can once more enjoy the work she does and see the smiling faces of her customers again.

**CELEBRATING KIDSFIRST VOLUNTEERS** | We are profoundly grateful to our incredible KidsFIRST volunteers, who devoted nearly 350 hours this year to help LifeSight provide free vision screenings for children. In September, at our annual Volunteer Picnic & Salute, we honored their dedication, and **celebrated John**



**Brown as KidsFIRST Volunteer of the Year and John and his wife, Bobbi Brown, as Volunteer Couple of the Year.** Since joining in 2023, John and Bobbi have made a remarkable impact on our mission and community. To every volunteer who gives their time, energy, and heart – you are the reason children can see a brighter future.



**2025 SCHOLARSHIP AWARD** | We are pleased to congratulate Amanda Rook, the 2025 recipient of the Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman Memorial Scholarship, which is awarded through an endowment established by LifeSight at the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine. "I sincerely thank you for your generous support to help me pursue my dream of ophthalmology," Amanda wrote. "I am excited to be rotating at various ophthalmology programs, and in the future, applying for ophthalmology residency." Upon completing her residency, Amanda hopes to

return to the Midwest to practice. "It is so rewarding to hear from patients about how protecting their vision allows them to continue doing the things they love with the people they love."



**YFS KIDS FAIR** | LifeSight was proud to once again join the YFS Kids Fair, offering KidsFIRST Free Vision Screenings for children ages 6 months through 5th grade to identify vision problems early to protect young eyes from long-term vision loss. This year, 436 children received free screenings.

Of those, 59 had risk factors found and were referred to an eye doctor for further care to ensure they can see, learn, and thrive. We extend heartfelt thanks to our dedicated screening volunteers and Monument Health for sponsoring sunglasses for every child screened – shaping a future where every child can see well to reach their fullest potential.

# CASINO ROYALE

## A "PARTY WITH A PURPOSE"



Our 13th annual **Casino Royale Charity Affair** on September 27 was an evening of fun and philanthropy - blending lively entertainment with heartfelt purpose to raise critical funds to prevent vision loss and celebrate the gift of sight.

Casino Royale has raised nearly \$350,000 in net proceeds, directly supporting LifeSight's mission. These funds provide free vision screenings for children, eye exams and glasses for low income individuals, sight restoring surgeries for underserved adults, scholarships for future ophthalmologists, and innovative research into community eye care and children's vision health.

We would like to extend special thanks to **Mimi Herrick** of Good Morning KOTA Territory and **JD Hewitt** of Hewitt Land Company for joining us for the festivities as emcee and auctioneer, respectively!

We also want to recognize the corporate sponsors listed below whose partnership and generosity make the Casino Royale festivities possible.

**We look forward to having you join us when we "Party with a Purpose" next year at the fourteenth annual Casino Royale Charity Affair on Saturday, September 26, 2026, at the Hilton Garden Inn Rapid City!**

# CASINO royale

## SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 27, 2025

Presented by



and supported by



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