

The Sight Center of NW PA

Form 990

Page 2 Part III: Statement of Program Service Accomplishments

Mission: The mission of the Sight Center is *to prevent blindness and promote independence for those with vision loss and those who are blind.*

4a. Prevention of Blindness: Research confirms that 25% of children enter kindergarten with a visual condition that impedes learning. As part of our mission to prevent blindness, the Center provided 6000 pediatric vision screenings and education in pre-schools, child-care centers and kindergarten registration events in our seven-county service area from July 1, 2019 through March 19, 2020. Following COVID-related government restrictions, we curtailed the service March 19. Beginning June 15, 2020, the Center continued to serve our mission by conducting COVID-safe, "drive-up" vision screenings at the Center. Roughly 6% of children screened failed the screening and required professional follow-up for conditions from poor visual acuity to amblyopia/strabismus to one child with a suspected brain tumor. Parents of all children who failed screenings were contacted at 30-, 60-, and 90-days post-screening to ensure care was provided to the child.

All children who receive a vision screening are educated about eye health and safety (6,000); 480 adults participated in group discussions about eye health and nutrition and the importance of professional care

In support of its mission to prevent blindness, in 2017 the Sight Center implemented the National Diabetes Prevention Program (NDPP) created and sponsored by the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Diabetes is the leading cause of severe and permanent vision loss in adults of all ages. By preventing or delaying the on-set of diabetes, we prevent or delay diabetes-related damage to the eyes. The Center has received and maintained full national CDC recognition for this program since 2017. More than 250 people have successfully graduated with weight loss at or in excess of the prescribed 5-7% and increased their exercise to a minimum of 150 minutes per week. The DPP continued through COVID shutdowns by utilizing a virtual platform when groups were not allowed to gather. All cohorts returned to in-person classes when the shutdown was lifted, and we only lost two participants overall.

Vision Rehabilitation: The goal of vision rehabilitation is to improve quality of life in people living with vision loss. The Center provides low vision examinations and occupational therapy to adults and children with reduced vision in order to maintain independence. Research states that 1 out of 3 older adults are diagnosed with a progressive eye disease which affects their vision and makes it difficult to complete activities of daily living independently.

250 new clients were referred to low vision clinic. 164 out of 167 (98%) clients seen report having a positive experience/appointment at the Sight Center based on surveys completed by our clients.

Nearly 250 patients were referred to clinic, but only 167 were able to be seen due to COVID-19 shut down in March. An entire quarter was lost.

Blindness Services and Social Support: Independence is achieved or maintained by those with vision loss or blindness through Social Support and Case Management. 22 uninsured or underinsured children were provided with eye exams and/or received glasses; 36 uninsured or underinsured adults were provided with eye exams and/or received glasses; 17 out-of-town-trips (Cleveland/Pittsburgh) were provided to low vision adults in need of specialty eye care; 160 low vision and blind clients were provided with ongoing Case Management and Specialized Support Services, including but not limited to: assistance with mail reading & correspondence, bill payment & banking, form completion, grocery shopping, access to prescriptions, and transportation to medical appointments & other essential services which enable them to live independently with severe vision loss or blindness. (Approximately 1,920 local rides provided to clients annually; 3,492 hours of transport, 925 hours of supportive counseling and 308 hours of life skills education); 14 low vision and blind children participated in a week-long Summer Sports Camp, a 6-week Winter Ski Camp, and a Technology Seminar; 24 low vision and blind adults participated in a bi-weekly support and education program, including but not limited to: technology assistance, transportation options, white cane instruction, cooking, crafts, resource sharing, socialization and mutual support.

Clients of the Sight Center are evaluated for changing needs and challenges as they occur, and service plans are reviewed and updated with clients individually on an annual basis. Referrals are made to appropriate community service programs and private service providers, as appropriate.

Social support programs continued uninterrupted during the COVID-19 shutdowns and uncertain times of the fall. In fact, these programs saw increased demand due to family support reductions and other agencies who were forced to close. Sight Center drivers and social service providers continued to visit and assist our older blind and visually impaired clients and helped them meet their independence, medical and social needs.