

# Update

BUILDING SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVES

**NJFFB**

## October is Blindness Awareness Month in New Jersey

### NJFFB Hosts Vision Symposium

Professionals and executives from various health-related fields attended the NJFFB Vision Symposium on October 1 to kick off New Jersey's first Blindness Awareness Month. Distinguished speakers included the renowned Dr. Marco Zarbin, Professor and Chair of the Institute of Ophthalmology and Visual Science at UMDNJ; Mr. Vito DeSantis, Director of the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired; and David Feinhals, CVRT, Program Director at NJFFB. Visit [www.njffb.org/events.html](http://www.njffb.org/events.html) for information and photos from this event. Thanks to our lead sponsor Investors Savings Bank for their generous support, as well as *C-Tech*, *Graham and Associates*, *My Limo*, *Saint Clare's Health System*, and *The Murphy Law Firm*.

## NJFFB Training Approved for CEU Status

Social Workers receive 3.5 continuing education hours for participating in the NJFFB class, "Vision Loss: from Adjustment to Adaptation." NJFFB provides a variety of trainings for professionals in assisted living, human resources, social work, occupational and recreational therapy and for staff working with aging and disabled populations. For more information on this or other specialized trainings for professionals or direct service providers, contact the NJFFB Program Department for fees and scheduling.

**Don't Take Chances  
With Your Eye Health.  
Schedule Your  
Exam Today.**

## Vision Fact: Diabetes is the Leading Cause of Blindness in the US

In the United States there are about 4.1 million adults, age 40 and older, with diabetic retinopathy. Each year 24,000 adults become blind from diabetic retinopathy. This makes diabetes the leading cause of blindness. About 45 percent of individuals who have either type 1 or type 2 diabetes are affected by diabetic retinopathy.

### What is Diabetic Retinopathy?

Diabetic retinopathy occurs when the blood vessels in the retina become weak and damaged. Vision can be blurred or "floating spots" may be present. This vision loss is a complication of diabetes and usually occurs in both eyes.

### Are You at Risk?

Those who are at greater risk of developing diabetic retinopathy are those with:

- Type 1 or type 2 diabetes
- Have poor control of blood sugar levels
- Have had diabetes for a long period of time
- Are Hispanic or African-American

### What Can You Do?

Those who have diabetes should control their blood sugar and follow a strict diet to reduce the risk of developing diabetic retinopathy. They should also have an annual comprehensive eye exam to detect early signs. After being diagnosed with diabetic retinopathy, eye exams should be more frequent.

### When Should You Get a Screening?

The American Academy of Ophthalmology now recommends that adults with no signs or risk factors for eye disease get a baseline eye disease screening at age 40—the time when early signs of disease and changes in vision may start to occur.

### What Are the Symptoms?

There are no symptoms in the early stages of diabetic retinopathy. Blurred vision and floaters may be present as the disease progresses. If changes in vision are experienced and persist for a period of time consult an eye doctor.

### Who Can Diagnose Diabetic Retinopathy?

Diabetic retinopathy can be diagnosed by an ophthalmologist during a comprehensive eye exam.

### Is There a Treatment?

According to the Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the best treatment is prevention. Maintaining blood sugar levels and a strict diet can slow the onset of diabetic retinopathy. If the disease progresses, laser surgery is used to stop leakage and further growth of blood vessels. Although this treatment is effective, it is not a cure.

### What is the Prognosis?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of Americans who have diabetes has increased to 24 million in the past two years. The number of individuals, 40 years and older, diagnosed with diabetic retinopathy is expected to triple by 2050. Those 65 years and older will increase from 3 million in 2005 to 11.8 million in 2050. The National Eye Institute reports that by 2020 that number is projected to grow from 4.1 million to 7.2 million.



Normal vision.



Scene viewed by a person  
with diabetic retinopathy.

Editors note: This article was compiled from materials and statistics from sources cited and from: <http://www.lighthouse.org/aboutus/press/press-releases/new-statistics>; Saaddine, et.al, The National Eye Institute, NEI Archives of Ophthalmology, Prevent Blindness America, and the American Academy of Ophthalmology.



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## NJ FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND AT DIAMOND SPRING

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The mission of the NJ Foundation for the Blind is to enable adults who are blind or visually impaired to lead independent and productive lives through training in home management, assistive technologies, and orientation and mobility.

Se habla Español  
This publication is available in audio format on request.

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## 'Tis The Season to be Jolly and Generous

### **10% is Donated to NJFFB When You Book a Ride through 'My Limo'**

For special occasions that call for a stretch, routine trips to the airport, or a luxury van for a corporate event, just book through My Limo and mention NJ Foundation for the Blind. My Limo will donate 10% of your base fare to NJFFB. My Limo offers nationwide limousine service, anytime, anywhere. Just remember to mention NJ Foundation for the Blind or NJFFB when you call. *This offer is for new business only and cannot be applied to any existing contracts, regular established routes, or combined with any other offers. Call 800-624-6112 or book online at [www.mylimo.com](http://www.mylimo.com).*

### **Visit IGIVE.COM and Name NJ Foundation for the Blind as Your Cause!**

This Holiday Season, every purchase you make, or gift you give, can result in a donation to NJFFB. Over 700 major stores participate and there is no extra cost involved. Just go to IGIVE.COM and follow the easy instructions to name NJ Foundation for the Blind as your cause. It's so easy and you will be amazed at how good every transaction will make you feel!

### **Find the Perfect Holiday Gift for Someone Who is Vision Impaired**

Visit our Vision Store for a unique array of products and devices that helps make life easier and more fun. NJFFB stocks scrabble, bingo, playing cards and other tactile and adaptive games. Talking products like watches, prescription bottles, money and color identifiers are also on the shelves. Magnifying glasses, bump dots, and large print items are also very popular items. Electronic devices and assistive technologies can be ordered through our catalogs with guidance from NJFFB experts. Please call for an appointment to browse our selection. Proceeds support the NJFFB program.

## **Life Not Lost**

Once I saw the world  
With my eyes open and my mind closed.  
Then one day, I lost my sight.  
I became sad and lost at the same time.  
Then I found a social worker who led me to  
A new world called the NJ Foundation for the Blind.  
So now I see, through the touch of my cane,  
and the vision of the Foundation,  
I can live a new life again.

*This poem was written by Ed, 57, a student at NJFFB. Although legally blind for thirty years, Ed worked as first cook at a hospital and even owned his own deli before eventually developing surgical glaucoma. At NJFFB, Ed is learning computer and internet skills and hopes to re-enter the job market. He still enjoys cooking and sometimes treats fellow students to one of his delicious specialties.*

## **Learning to Cope in New One-Day Program**

The NJFFB One Day Essential Low Vision Program has resulted in excellent feedback from both caregivers and low vision individuals attending this innovative new program. Low-vision participants want to live more independently using the vision they have left, while their caregivers are just as eager to learn techniques that will not hinder their progress. "Our new One Day Essential Low Vision Program delivers over 40 strategies and tips in the span of a single day," says Iris Torres, Executive Director. "It is an exhausting but exhilarating experience. And now caregivers and low-vision individuals know NJFFB is the place to find the resources they need."