



# Engage. Educate. Employ. Empower.

» Cleveland Sight Center (CSC) is a place where talent, innovation and opportunity flourish to meet the needs of people who are blind or visually impaired. Inside these pages are empowering stories that highlight our programs and how they serve that community. Supported by 180 employees, augmented by more than 450 volunteers and under dynamic leadership, CSC is navigating through a new strategic plan which invites partners to join us so we can chart the best course for our future. We hope the pages that follow educate you about the critical needs we address in our Northeast Ohio region and how important it is for us to engage the community to reach a broader understanding.

Thank you for joining us in our journey to become better equipped and better prepared to guide our clients through theirs.

# Help us Engage.

## EARLY INTERVENTION

### » Early Intervention Programs

Cleveland Sight Center provides Early Intervention services to the families of infants and toddlers who are blind or visually impaired across Northeast Ohio. Because 75% of what a young child learns is visual, blindness or low vision can be a significant obstacle to their development.

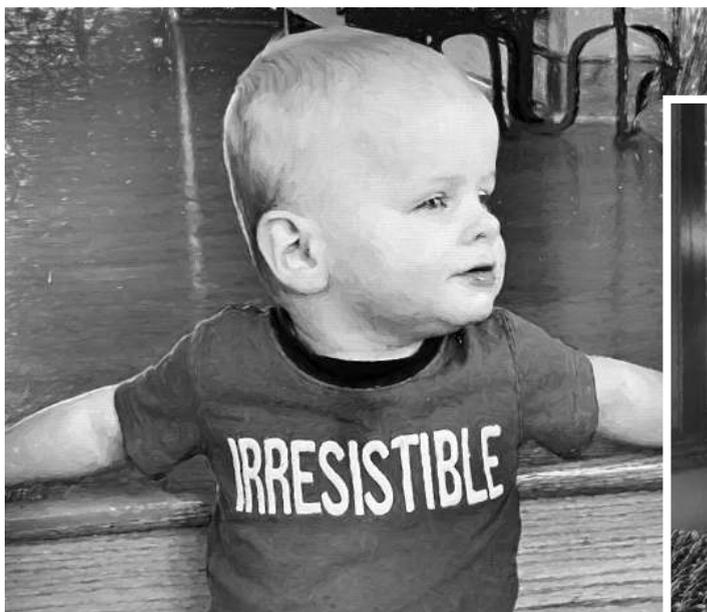
CSC's Early Intervention philosophy is that parents and caregivers are the most important teachers in a child's life, thus we provide parent education in concert with direct intervention. Early Intervention Specialists engage with and educate families about how visual impairment can affect a child's development, work with them to reach educational milestones and provide strategies and resources to assist them as their child grows.

## Owen's Story

» When Owen was brought home from the hospital to join his two brothers, his family noticed his eyes looked cloudy. The doctors diagnosed him with Primary Aphakia – the lenses of his eyes were missing. They had so many questions. How will he learn? What will the future hold for him?

His family learned that we were not alone – they had Cleveland Sight Center. Brenda, an Early Intervention Specialist from CSC, entered their lives when Owen was just a few weeks old and taught them how to begin to unlock his limitless potential. She and Cleveland Sight Center have been there for each new milestone and challenge.

At two years old, Owen is an active, curious child because of CSC's early engagement. Owen will go to school with his brothers when the time comes, and even college. He can be anything he wants to be and someday he will have a career, a home and a family of his own – just like anyone else.



# Help us **Educate.**

## SUMMER YOUTH WORK EXPERIENCE

### »» **Summer Youth Work Experience**

Compared to 41% of their counterparts without sensory disabilities, 24% of young adults aged 18-34 with sensory disabilities (including blindness or a visual impairment) are in college or have attained a Bachelor's degree or higher. This substantial difference in education negatively impacts youth with vision impairments in terms of employment and earning potential.

Cleveland Sight Center's Summer Youth Work Experience (SYWE) is an annual five-week educational program for individuals aged 16-22 who are blind or visually impaired which focuses on teaching skills to succeed in the workforce and/or in higher education. For most teens and young adults, this program is their first opportunity to experience independent living. Only 10% of individuals who are blind or visually impaired are employed or looking for work. Summer Youth Work Experience fills a need by helping them learn daily living skills, social skills and develop a work history.

## Gabriella's Story



At six months of age, Gabriella was diagnosed with an inherited retinal degenerative disease called Leber Congenital Amaurosis which affects the proper functioning of the retina and results in blindness. **It is our privilege to have played a role in Gabriella's journey as she became a well-rounded individual over the course of decades with CSC.**

Her success is a testament to what is possible if we can educate early as a long-term partner. She was involved in our program offerings beginning with Early Intervention and then moving on to participating in our Summer Youth Work Experience program for young adults who are blind or visually impaired.

In addition to earning a paycheck, Gabriella received instruction in job readiness, daily living skills and training in the areas of orientation and mobility. **CSC's early and consistent engagement allowed her to seek further education.** In May 2018, she graduated from Baldwin Wallace University with a degree in music therapy.

“

Cleveland Sight Center has given me fantastic opportunities to develop my professional skills. I am incredibly grateful, and am glad that I have had opportunities to pay it forward.” – Gabriella



# Help us **Employ.**

## CALL CENTER

### »» Call Center

People with disabilities have a high unemployment rate (more than 70%) despite the fact they have capabilities that are extremely valuable in the workplace.

Launched in 2010, CSC's Call Center has a workforce of 70 employees, nearly all of whom are blind, visually impaired or have another work-limiting disability.

The Call Center processes 500,000 calls and 50,000 emails annually for several of Ohio's governmental agencies and has excelled at helping these agencies improve customer service to their constituents while providing meaningful training and employment opportunities for people who are blind or have low vision. This unique business model allows persons who are blind or have other disabilities find meaningful, competitive employment.

## Andre's Story



Andre was a paralegal in Cleveland when, in 2002, he began noticing floating spots in his eyes. He'd been a diabetic for decades and learned he had Diabetic Retinopathy, a condition where the retina detaches from the eye. By 2005 and after nine medical procedures he was left completely blind.

After losing his vision, he grew distant from friends he thought he could rely on. Then, in 2007, Andre was introduced to Cleveland Sight Center. This was the first time he had connected with other individuals who experienced vision loss and for the first time since 2005 he had hope for his future.

Andre went through orientation and mobility training and learned to read Braille. He became motivated to go back to school and earned Bachelors and Master's degrees in social work at Cleveland State University. Through it all, Cleveland Sight Center supported him and hired him to work at the Call Center where he is now a manager. In the last three years, Andre has managed multiple contracts and enjoys helping people from a variety of backgrounds by getting them the resources they need.



CSC is hope, it's understanding, it's safety, it's knowledge. When you step out of these walls you have learned the skills you need to accomplish your ambitions in life. I have the confidence to live my life from everything I have learned at Cleveland Sight Center and that is the greatest gift I could ever receive." – Andre



# Help us **Empower.**

## INDEPENDENT LIVING

### » Independent Living

52% of adults ages 18-44 report problems with instrumental activities of living such as shopping, meal preparation, money management, housework and using the telephone. 24% experience difficulty in activities of self-care such as bathing, dressing, eating and getting around inside the home. 40% experience difficulties in functional activities such as bending, walking, standing, lifting and climbing steps.

Cleveland Sight Center exists to help individuals who are blind or visually impaired live the life they desire. Our independent living programming focuses on each client's needs, goals and preferences.

CSC offers services in daily living activities, orientation and mobility and computer and device usage. These programs empower our clients to feel comfortable in self-care in their own homes, learn to navigate unfamiliar environments and prepare them for employment.

## Alicia's Story



Alicia started losing vision as a teenager and was considered legally blind for 20 years with an undiagnosed disease later found to be Dominant Optic Atrophy which causes the optic nerve to die.

After many years of navigating on her own, she was connected to Cleveland Sight Center to learn orientation and mobility skills and started to use a white cane to travel. Through our rehabilitation specialists, Alicia was able to regain independent living skills which made her more confident to raise children of her own and care for others. Eventually, Alicia returned to Cleveland Sight Center where she learned valuable computer and customer service skills.

It has been over 20 years since Alicia first learned about Cleveland Sight Center. She is still employed with the Center today and has a variety of roles and increasing responsibilities. In her current role as a Community Relations Specialist, Alicia travels throughout Northeast Ohio educating individuals and groups about Cleveland Sight Center thereby helping to empower and give hope to others who are blind or visually impaired.



“

I wish someone had told me about Cleveland Sight Center [decades ago.] It would have helped me to figure out what I wanted in order to find out what I needed.” – Alicia

# Help us **Prepare.**

## THE CHALLENGE

### **The Challenge**

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Our services begin where those of the medical community end.

People who are blind and visually impaired face many challenges among constantly evolving needs. Public funding for services to address these needs is declining and limits the number of individuals served and the scope of services available.

CSC needs to prepare to deliver our services in new ways that minimize burdens, eliminate barriers and provide the maximum benefit through a model that is relevant to the current and future needs of our clients and not reliant upon public funding.

This fundamental shift will allow us to be available to more people in a greater variety of circumstances. We are committed to providing programs and services we know to be best practices while applying new technologies to time-hardened skills to adapt to vision impairment.



## You Can Help Us

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- Achieve greater accessibility by reaching more clients and serving them most efficiently in a global and digital world.
- Deliver more relevant programs and services wherever and whenever our clients need them.
- Upgrade facilities and technologies.
- Increase the already outstanding quality of care that has served our clients for the last 112 years.
- Fulfill our agency's mission to empower people with vision loss to realize their full potential and to shape the community's vision of that potential.

# Help us **Navigate.**

## THE JOURNEY



### Help us navigate the journey of those we serve

- **Engage:** You can help guide children like Owen and his family through the obstacles of reaching critical educational milestones.
- **Educate:** You can help guide young people like Gabriella toward preparation for an independent and successful life.
- **Employ:** You can help guide adults like Andre to finding meaningful and competitive employment.
- **Empower:** You can help guide the future confidence and success of people like Alicia who offer hope to others who are blind or visually impaired.



## And those we have yet to serve...

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...by coming along side us so we can safely navigate the terrain which will guide us to a future where we have greater flexibility to be responsive no matter the circumstance. Join the **Navigate the Journey** campaign to raise \$20 million over the next five years which will safely guide our continued, sustainable course.

**Thank you for your guidance and support!**



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