FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Contact: Samantha Singer, Director of Advancement
Direct: (218) 624-4828 Ext. 125
Email: sam@lcfvl.org

Lighthouse Center for Vision Loss looks to raise awareness during Medication Safety for the Blind Week - September 9th-15th
This annual event promotes accessible prescription labels for blind, visually impaired and print impaired people. In the Northland, nearly 1 in 5 adults 65+ has a vision impairment.

Duluth, MN: The Lighthouse Center for Vision Loss encourages individuals with vision impairments and family members to ask at their pharmacy about options for prescription labels to make them easier to read for people with vision loss.

Karen MS Bastianelli is the Director of the Pharmaceutical Care Learning Center, at University of Minnesota Duluth’s Department of Pharmacy Practice and Pharmaceutical Sciences. Dr. Bastianelli also serves on the Lighthouse Center for Vision Loss’ Board of Directors and acknowledges the important role pharmacies play in medication safety for those with visual impairments of blindness:

“Taking medications incorrectly is a serious public health problem. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that more than 1 million emergency room visits and 280,000 hospitalizations occur each year due to adverse drug events. People can reduce their risk of inadvertent medication errors by discussing vision difficulties with your pharmacist and keeping medications in the original prescription vials. Prescription labels should utilize formats that use larger fonts, white-space, simple language, and logical organization to improve readability and comprehension standards as set by the Institute of Safe Medication Practices.”
Pharmacies are required to accommodate any request for accessible labels by a qualified individual and by law cannot charge extra for this service. Sometimes stores are unaware of this law and might not know of the options their pharmacy offers.

The Lighthouse hopes to raise awareness of solutions for people with vision loss to safely manage their medications independently. Labeling medications clearly with large print labels that are more easily read is one possible solution individuals and family members can ask their pharmacist about.

Nearly 1 in 5 adults aged 65 and older are experiencing vision loss (National Health Information Survey). It is important for the public to be aware of solutions for people with vision impairments or blindness. The most common causes of vision loss for older adults include Macular Degeneration, Glaucoma, Diabetic Retinopathy, and Cataracts. Seniors with vision loss face a wide array of poor health outcomes, including falling, depression, medication errors, social isolation, and premature nursing home placement (2013 report published by the American Academy of Ophthalmology).

During Medication Safety for the Blind Week, September 9th – 15th, the Lighthouse Center for Vision Loss will be reaching out to local pharmacies to make sure all of their staff know of their responsibility to provide medication labels that are accessible for individuals with vision loss. The Lighthouse will also be highlighting different options for accessible medication labels (including large print, talking pill reminders, and other options available locally) at Vision Loss Support Groups that meet throughout the region (for a complete list of vision loss support groups, visit www.lcfvl.org/supportgroups).

###

Lighthouse Center for Vision Loss

The Lighthouse Center for Vision Loss, also known as Duluth Lighthouse for the Blind, fosters independent and vibrant lives for individuals with vision loss through training and social/emotional supports. The Lighthouse serves 1,600 people each year through Adjustment to Vision Loss Training, the Safe at Home with Vision Loss Program for seniors, Transition Program for teens with vision loss, the Lighthouse Low Vision Store, and the Radio Talking Book Network. Visit www.lcfvl.org/successstories to learn more.