JOYCE’S SUCCESS STORY

Independence. Safety. Quality of Life.

Despite significant vision loss due to macular degeneration, and the loss of her husband 6 years ago, Joyce is living a full and independent life in her own home. How is she doing this? In 2017, Joyce’s daughter heard about the Lighthouse through a medical professional. She encouraged her mom to seek services, and soon, Lynne, a Lighthouse occupational therapist, visited Joyce’s home.

Empowered to Keep Doing What She Loves
Over several sessions, Lynne taught Joyce how to keep doing the things she loves, despite her low vision. She taught Joyce adaptive ways to cook without cutting or burning herself. Now Joyce is cooking and baking again for her family, including 4 children, 7 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren.

To help Joyce read more easily, Lynne referred her to Dr. Bratvold, the Lighthouse Low Vision Optometrist, who recommended a variety of magnification options, including a closed circuit television (CCTV). Joyce was elated, “I am so happy! Now I know there’s something out there to get me to read again.” Lynne helped her acquire a CCTV free of charge and taught her how to use it for reading and other daily tasks. She also referred Joyce to State Services for the Blind (SSB), who gave Joyce an audio book player and a talking book radio. Lynne even made it easier for Joyce to watch TV. She applied tactile and contrast markings to Joyce’s TV remote control and taught Joyce how to use it more easily to select channels and volume. She also suggested a different placement for the TV to reduce glare.

Connected with Others
Joyce misses her husband tremendously, but she is connecting with others. She is an active member of the Lighthouse Support Group. “My family doesn’t understand all I go through, but your support group members do,” Joyce said. She is also a Peer Mentor for others with vision loss – her way of giving back.
Simple Home Adaptations
With Joyce’s permission, Lynne adapted Joyce’s home to make it easier and safer for Joyce:

- **A Special Phone.** Lynne recommended a large button phone to enable Joyce to easily dial out – a critical safety issue for any older adult living alone.

- **Improved Lighting.** Joyce’s family followed Lynne’s recommendations to upgrade her lighting. Lynne helped Joyce set up fixtures and bulbs that provide directional lighting of the right lumen and color to maximize Joyce’s existing vision. Even turning two light wall fixtures from pointing down to up helped tremendously in the kitchen and hallway.

- **Safer Stairs.** High contrast striping was done to the edge of Joyce’s basement stairs. This improved her safety by giving Joyce the ability to detect the edge of the stairs.

- **A Safer Kitchen.** Lynne applied tactile dots to the controls on Joyce’s microwave and stove, so Joyce can operate them with greater ease and safety. She also added measuring cups with big lettering.

- **Safer Room Arrangement.** Joyce’s family followed Lynne’s recommendation to re-arrange furniture in Joyce’s living space for greater ease and safety, and to position the television against a wall to greatly reduce glare.

Future Goals: Technology
With the help of the Lighthouse, Joyce is now exploring Smart Home possibilities, learning how to use the iPad and iPhone with enlarged font and voice commands, and investigating the Seeing AI app. This free app can read short passages of written text aloud, recognize faces, read bar codes, and identify currency. The Lighthouse’s new “Technology and Me” initiative helps older adults connect with technologies to improve safety and quality of life.

Advice for Others
From her own experience, Joyce says, “It’s hard to let go of things you can no longer do [in the same way]…. Go to your doctor and reach out to the Lighthouse…. They will make your life so much better.” Joyce understands why people might not reach out for help. “When people you don’t know come into your home, you’re afraid to let them become involved in your life because they might make you leave your home; that some people might evaluate you and say you can’t live on your own anymore. But the Lighthouse helps you stay in your home,” Joyce said.

Joyce encourages anyone with vision loss: “Contact the Lighthouse. They will make your life so much better.”