



## WEIGEL WILLIAMSON CENTER FOR VISUAL REHABILITATION

# Visionary

Making a difference through your generosity

WINTER 2012

## LOW VISION SUCCESS STORY

Lisa Spellman, Publications/Media Specialist, UNMC Public Relations



Peggy Campbell credits her new bioptic telescope with helping her regain her freedom to drive.

“I got my driver’s license,” Peggy Campbell exclaimed into the phone.

The 73-year-old grandmother worried for several months whether or not she would even get her license renewed. And when the day came, she credits the Weigel Williamson Center for Visual Rehabilitation for helping her.

That’s why one of the first things she did after passing the test was to call the staff at the Center with the good news.

“I couldn’t be more pleased with how they helped me,” said Campbell, who lives in Lincoln.

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## What’s A DaVinci?

The latest technology for low vision readers is a CCTV (video magnifier) that can read to you!

The DaVinci is a desktop CCTV featuring text-to-speech (OCR) and a video camera that can be used for near, intermediate and distance viewing. The autofocus camera is attached to a high definition 24” LCD screen by a sliding, pivoting arm that allows the camera to be rotated 340 degrees.

The near viewing mode is used for reading or tabletop activities such as writing or crafts. When reading material is placed on the table beneath the camera, it can be magnified and viewed in high contrast mode or color mode. The large screen allows you to see more of the page even with high levels of magnification. When you get tired of



reading, just center the text and press a button and the DaVinci will read the text to you. The word being read is highlighted on the screen while it is being read. You can choose a male or female voice and use the headphone port to listen without disturbing others.

By turning the camera toward you, you enter the self-viewing mode. The self-viewing mode can be used for grooming tasks like shaving or applying makeup.

The DaVinci can also be used for distance viewing activities. Students can use it for viewing a whiteboard or powerpoint presentation. It’s great for bird watching in your own back yard, too.

For questions about the DaVinci or other low vision devices, call the Center at 402-559-2463.

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## Dear Friends,

Because of your support, lives have changed.  
Because of your support, this spring we will be celebrating our 5th year of providing low vision services at the Weigel Williamson Center—very exciting news for the upcoming year.

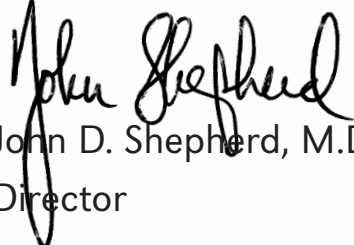
By far the most exciting news to share with you from this past year is the opening of our satellite clinic in Hastings. Every Monday either Evy Katz, our occupational therapist, or I make the trip to the Retina Center of Nebraska in Hastings where we provide our low vision rehabilitation services.

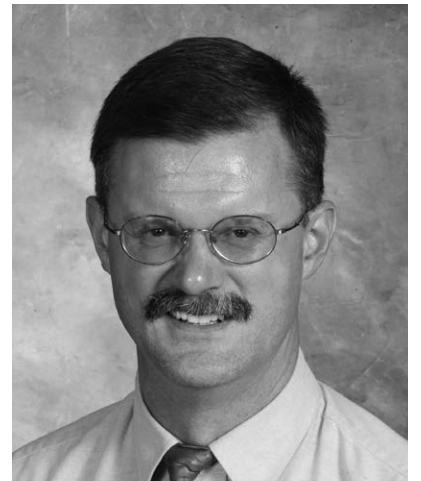
The services have been very well received by the community in Greater Nebraska as transportation to Omaha is often difficult and a hardship for many of our clients.

The opportunity remains to support the work of the Center with a gift to the Dinsdale Endowment fund. Such funding assists us in our efforts to insure these important low vision services are available to Nebraskans all across the state.

We sincerely thank you for your past support, and future support, as we look forward to celebrating our 5th anniversary.

All best wishes,

  
John D. Shepherd, M.D.  
Director



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## LOW VISION SUCCESS STORY Continued from Page 1

Campbell suffers from cone dystrophy, a retinal disease which decreases her central vision much like macular degeneration. While Campbell, who wears trifocals, doesn't have any trouble navigating her home, cooking dinner, or playing bridge with friends, the cone dystrophy does make it hard for her to drive.

"You have a hard time reading road signs until you are right on top of them," she said.

She was very concerned about passing the vision test at the DMV. Then her optometrist suggested Campbell go to the Weigel Williamson Center where she learned about bioptic telescopes.

A retired medical laboratory technologist, Campbell felt confident using the microscope-like lens that is mounted at the top of her glasses.

"It was like homecoming for me and the best part is I could see 20/20 with them," she said.

Campbell worked with occupational therapist, Evy Katz, to learn how to use them while driving.

"You don't drive looking through the bioptic telescope all the time. I look through the regular prescription part of my glasses most of the time while driving," Campbell said. "But when I need to read a road sign, I've learned how to tip my head

down and quickly look through the telescope to see it."

First, Katz had her wear the bioptic telescope as a passenger in the car, identifying road signs and traffic lights and scanning the road ahead. Katz also encouraged Campbell to practice at home. She was instructed to place various pictures of road signs throughout the house and to try to spot them through the telescope as quickly as possible.

Once she felt confident she could do that, she drove around her church parking lot and eventually grew comfortable enough to take her driver's test.

With her bioptic telescope and permission slip in hand from Dr. John Shepherd, medical director of the Center, Campbell entered the DMV.

"I was nervous during the driving test. We drove through the neighborhood around the DMV and then onto a four lane boulevard, but I passed and they didn't even make me take the written test," Campbell said delighted.

Now she is able to join her friends for bridge, go to the grocery store or to church whenever she wishes.

# Low Vision Driving and Community Mobility

Evy Katz OTR/L

One of the most difficult decisions for many people with low vision is to decide whether or not to continue driving. Our mobility affects our ability to participate in activities such as shopping, attending religious services, movies, plays and social gatherings. Many see a loss of the ability to drive as a loss of independence.

You should suspend driving if:

- you have failed the DMV vision screening test
- your eye care provider has recommended you not drive
- you feel unsure about your ability to drive safely

Even if you have 20/20 vision in each eye, but have a severe visual field loss, you should not be driving. You have a responsibility to yourself and to others.

Does this mean you can never drive again? Not necessarily. Some people with low vision can drive safely with the right device, training, skills and good judgment.

Start with a low vision evaluation to determine whether you are a candidate for driving. Your low vision provider will take into consideration your visual acuity (20/40, 20/60, etc.), your ability to see color and contrast, your glare sensitivity and any loss of peripheral vision. You will also need to consider your physical and mental health and any limitations you have.

Make sure you know the laws in your state regarding driving with low vision. Nebraska allows the use of bioptic telescopes when taking the driver's test, but Iowa does not. If it is determined that you would be able to use a device, such as a bioptic telescope, you must be willing to practice with it and complete special training.

What if driving is no longer an option? Identify your transportation needs. Think ahead and plan for your trips to utilize public transportation resources such as Moby, the Metro Area Transit bus program for the disabled, or the Share-A-Fare cab subsidy program. Another option is to hire a part time driver.

Two books I recommend for clients are:

1. *Driving with Confidence: A Practical Guide to Driving with Low Vision*, by Eli Peli and Doron Peli, World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd, 2002, River Edge, NJ.
2. *Finding Wheels: A Curriculum for Nondrivers with Visual Impairments for Gaining Control of Transportation Needs*, by Anne. L. Corn. Available from Amazon.com.

## ASK DR. SHEPHERD

### Question:

What are bioptic telescopes and how do they help driving?

### Answer:

Bioptic telescopes are eyeglasses that contain a miniature telescope mounted toward the top of the eyeglass lens. They function in much the same way as binoculars by enlarging images. When looking through the telescopic lens, the driver can see an object sooner, giving the driver more time to react. Drivers using bioptics look through their regular eyeglass lenses most of the time, and periodically glance through the telescope in the same way as a person periodically glances into the rear view mirror. Training with low vision professionals and commitment to practice on the part of the person with low vision are required for safe and optimum use of the telescope.

## HOW TO MAKE A GIFT

To make a donation to the endowment fund of the Weigel Williamson Center, contact Karen Levin at the University of Nebraska Foundation 402-502-4921, or [klevin@unfoundation.org](mailto:klevin@unfoundation.org). Gifts may also be made at [www.unmc.edu/lowvision](http://www.unmc.edu/lowvision).

# A Place for Renewed Hope and Help for Those with Low Vision

THE STAFF OF THE WEIGEL WILLIAMSON CENTER FOR VISUAL REHABILITATION

**John D. Shepherd, M.D.**

Director of the Weigel Williamson Center

**Frank Graf, O.D.**

Optometrist on Staff

**Patti Fries, O.D.**

Optometrist on Staff

**Evy Katz, OTR/L**

Low Vision Occupational Therapist

**Kathy VonDollen, R.N.**

Coordinator

**Pat Jones, R.N., B.A.N.**

Assistant Coordinator

The Weigel Williamson Center is a service of the UNMC Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences. It relies on the generosity of donor support in order to fulfill its mission of hope and help for those with low vision.

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## DONOR PROFILE: Alice Williamson

*Alice Williamson, a dear friend and benefactor of the Weigel Williamson Center for Visual Rehabilitation, passed away Nov. 6, 2012. Following is an article written just prior to her passing. It highlights her generous heart for giving and for helping those struggling with low vision. Alice and her sister, Beth Weigel, along with their husbands, Robert Williamson and Dr. Harry Weigel, made the lead gift to the Weigel Williamson Center building project. It was completed in 2008.*

When Alice Williamson of Omaha speaks about her support of important causes, she does so in an understated, modest manner. For her and her family, giving is not something out of the ordinary – for them, it is the ordinary.

“You just give where your heart is,” she explained. “You share.” Williamson owes her philanthropic nature to her parents, who she said “gave a lot of themselves in every way.” Like her Nebraskan parents, Irene and Winslow Van Brunt, Williamson was a graduate of the University of Nebraska (1950) and a strong supporter of her church, community and university.

She said her father “had a great interest in people and was very generous.” She described her mother as “outgoing and gracious.” These same qualities are found in Williamson and her sister, Beth Weigel.

“Our hearts go out to people who have had problems with their vision,” said Williamson, who underwent multiple eye surgeries. Her mother had macular degeneration, too.

“It was so frustrating to her,” she remembered. “We know her last days would have been so much happier if she had been able to see well enough to read. So the Weigel Williamson Center for Low Vision at UNMC was a good fit for our philanthropy.”

She recalled a phone call from a woman regarding a friend who had gone through rehab at the low vision center. “Alice, this woman is a different person now. She says, ‘I now have hope,’” the caller told her.

A phone call like that meant a lot to Williamson. It would have meant a lot to her parents, too. It’s proof that extraordinary things are happening because of a family whose giving is anything but ordinary.