



GOING BLIND AND GOING FORWARD

HOW TO USE:

GOING
BLIND

OUTREACH TOOLKIT

OUTREACH TOOLKIT FOR THE FILM, GOING BLIND

WHAT IS GOING BLIND?

Going Blind is an 80-minute documentary film by Peabody Award-winning producer/director Joseph Lovett, who suffers from sight-robbing glaucoma himself. The film is a look at each aspect of vision loss: preventing, treating and coping with it.

HOW TO USE GOING BLIND?

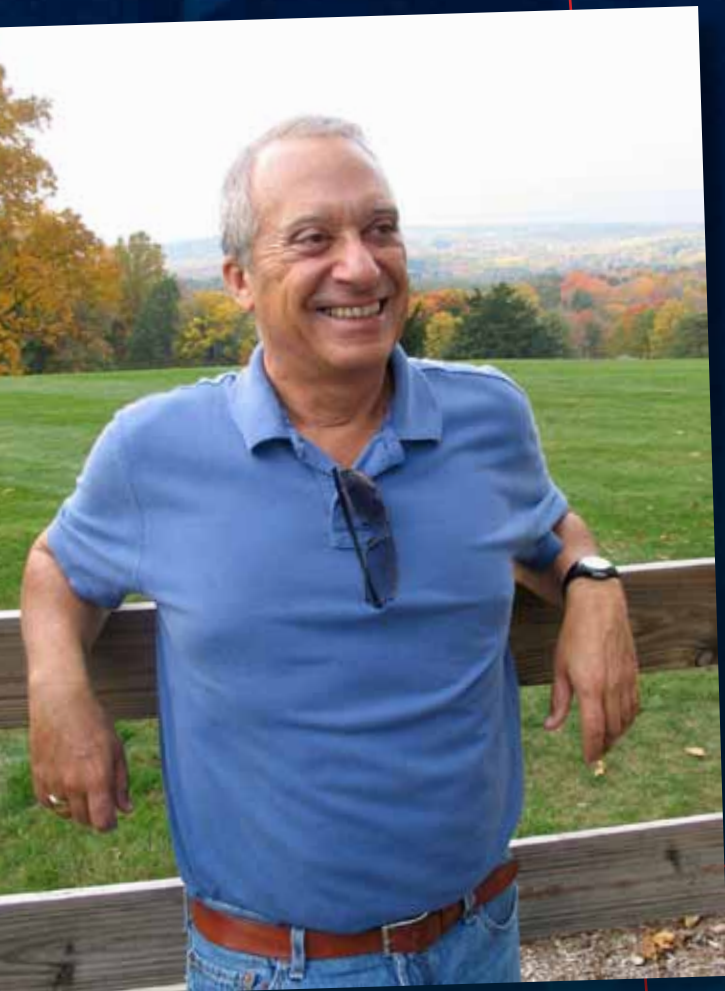
Screen the film locally to inform the public about the many issues concerning blindness and visual impairment. Anyone can become involved and raise awareness in their community.

Read on and contribute to the outreach effort.



Going Blind was made possible by major support from Reader's Digest Partners for Sight Foundation, Pfizer Ophthalmics, The Allergan Foundation, The National Eye Institute and other generous funders





GOING BLIND

COMING OUT OF THE DARK ABOUT VISION LOSS

Dear Colleagues,

Our highly praised new film *Going Blind* about vision loss (how to prevent it, detect it early, treat it properly and learn to cope with it) is available for screenings and discussions. The goal is to capture the public's imagination in addressing the many issues facing the blind and visually impaired. We encourage you to use *Going Blind* and *Going Forward: a forum on vision loss and blindness* to help raise awareness around the country through local community outreach.

These film screenings also provide professionals from different fields the opportunity to talk about how earlier referral to low vision therapy, new technology and better coordination among professionals vastly improves the quality of people's lives.

You can have your screenings at any time, but having it near international blind awareness dates like *World Sight Day*, *White Cane Day* or *Glaucoma Awareness Month* may improve your chances of achieving focused news coverage of the issues. The following pages in this toolkit are a step-by-step guide to help you set up successful screenings and discussions of *Going Blind* and the issues it raises.

Sincerely,

Joe Lovett



CONTENTS

- ~ SAMPLE INVITATION FOR COLLEAGUES, PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS & GUESTS - **PAGE 5**
- ~ HOW TO ORGANIZE A SCREENING OF GOING BLIND - **PAGE 6**
- ~ HOW TO ORGANIZE A DISCUSSION PANEL TO FOLLOW YOUR SCREENINGS - **PAGE 7**
- ~ **HOW TO FIND PANEL PARTICIPANTS:**
 - ~ NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS - **PAGE 8**
 - ~ LOCAL OPHTHALMOLOGISTS BY REGION - **PAGE 9**
 - ~ LOCAL OPTOMETRISTS BY REGION - **PAGE 10**
 - ~ LOCAL LOW VISION THERAPISTS BY REGION - **PAGE 11**
 - ~ NATIONAL BLIND ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS - **PAGE 12**
- ~ VISION CHECK-UPS AND REFERRALS AT YOUR SCREENING - **PAGE 13**
- ~ PUBLICITY FOR YOUR SCREENING - **PAGE 14**
- ~ SALIENT FACTS ABOUT VISION LOSS - **PAGE 15 + 16**
- ~ HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA - **PAGE 17**
- ~ OTHER ACTIVITIES - **PAGE 18**
- ~ FILM SYNOPSIS + CHARACTER BIOS - **PAGE 19 + 20**
- ~ WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT GOING BLIND - **PAGE 21**
- ~ CONTACT - **PAGE 22**

**SAMPLE INVITATIONS YOU CAN CUSTOMIZE
FOR COLLEAGUES, ORGANIZATIONAL
PARTNERS AND GUESTS:**



**You are invited to a special
screening of *Going Blind***

(Place) on (Date) at (time).

We have room for (XXXX) people and hope you will ask your membership to join us – or have a screening of your own.

A panel will follow our screening, including (X, X,X and X) who will answer questions about sight preservation, sight loss and coping with it.

We'd appreciate your help in finding ophthalmologists, optometrists, low vision therapists, mobility trainers and people using dogs and canes to be on our panel.

Sample Invite

Dear Colleagues,

It's time to come out of the dark about vision loss.

Join us and others and participate in **Going Blind and Going Forward**: a forum on vision loss and blindness raising awareness around the country with the help of local communities.

We'd like your help in organizing screenings of the highly praised new film **Going Blind** about vision loss (how to prevent it, detect it early, treat it properly and learn to cope with it) is available for screenings and discussions. Our goal is to address the many issues facing the blind and visually impaired and let people know how early detection can save their vision.

The film screenings also provide professionals from different fields the opportunity to talk about how better coordination of professional services and earlier referrals to **low vision therapy** and **new technology** can vastly improve the quality of people's lives.

Please call or email me at (your email) within the next 2 days and let's share ideas on who in our communities can benefit from learning about vision loss and what to do about it. Churches, Synagogues, schools, retirement homes, hospitals and corporate conference rooms are all great places for us to host screenings. Let's have your ideas!

1 http://www.who.int/mediacentre/events/annual/world_sight_day/en/index.html

2 <http://www.who.int/en/>

3 <http://www.iapb.org/>

4 <http://www.v2020.org/>



HOW TO ORGANIZE A SCREENING

An invitational screening of **Going Blind**, sponsored by local organizations, can **raise funds** and **awareness** of the different issues surrounding vision loss.

Screenings are suitable at a variety of locations:

- ~ Local Theatres (speak to the manager about donating space)
- ~ Community Halls
- ~ School Auditoriums
- ~ Libraries
- ~ Homes

To raise funds for one's organization, tickets can be sold and local businesses/institutions can be solicited for sponsorship. Additionally, ads can be sold inside the printed program.

Around the country, **Lions Clubs**⁵ work extensively to raise money for the visually impaired. They are aware of both **Going Blind** and this multi-faceted outreach effort. Local **Lions Clubs** may be able to offer their members to volunteer for screenings. They may also suggest a venue for the screening and help with the catering of the event.

Obtain a DVD screener of **Going Blind** at the institutional price of \$250 plus shipping and handling.

Go to **www.GoingBlindMovie.com** to order.

⁵ <http://www.lionsclubs.org/>



HOW TO ORGANIZE A PANEL

Follow the film with a **panel discussion** to ensure the issues can be explored further. We suggest you invite a **local newscaster** to MC the event and moderate the panel. Such a person can be enlisted to publicize the event with stories about coping with blindness in your community. The panel should be comprised of a few of the following participants:

- ~ Ophthalmologists
- ~ Optometrists
- ~ Low Vision Therapists (LVT)
- ~ Vision Rehabilitation Therapist (VRT)
- ~ Orientation and Mobility Therapists
- ~ Representative from Local Advocacy Groups
 - National Federation of the Blind⁶
 - American Foundation for the Blind⁷
 - American Council of the Blind⁸
- ~ Blind or Visually Impaired people with Guide Dog or Cane

Discussions that include blind people are invaluable when it includes blind people. They are the ones living and persevering with little or no sight. By putting a face on blindness we can remove the veil of prejudice and ignorance.

⁶ <http://www.nfb.org/>

⁷ <http://www.afb.org/>

⁸ <http://www.acb.org/>

HOW TO FIND PARTICIPANTS



NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

This list will be updated on the online version of the toolkit found at www.goingblindmovie.com

American Academy of Ophthalmology

~ Contact Siobhan Buanes: 415-447-0338

American Optometric Association

~ Contact Susan Thomas: 314-983-4263

~ DC Office: 703-739-9200

~ St. Louis Office: 314-991-4100

~ Toll Free: 800-365-2219

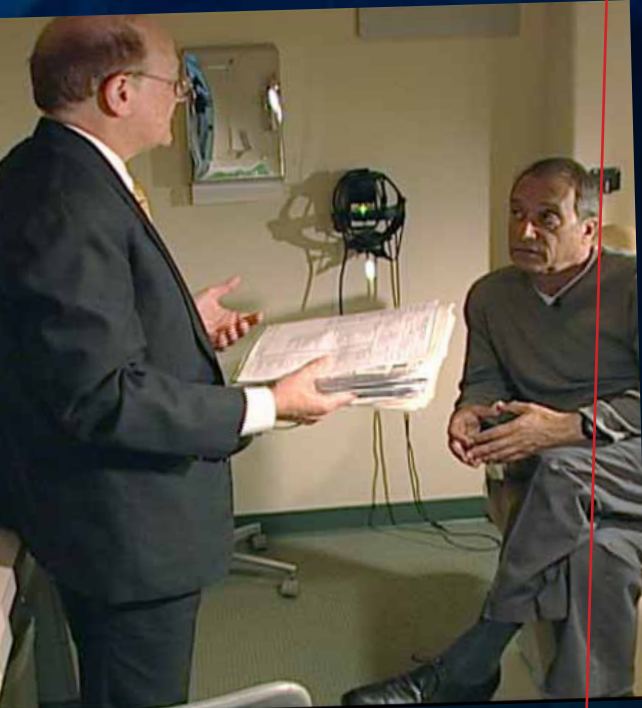
~ General Information: 314-961-8235

The Veterans Administration at the Hines Rehabilitation Center

~ Contact Jerry Schutter: 708-202-2112

jerry.schutter@va.gov

HOW TO FIND PARTICIPANTS



LOCAL OPHTHALMOLOGISTS BY REGION

Mid-Atlantic

~ Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins: Baltimore, MD, 410-955-5080

Midwest

~ Eye Physicians and Surgeons of Chicago: Chicago, IL
<http://www.eyechicago.com/>

Northeast

~ Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary: Boston, MA, 617-573-4199
~ New York Eye and Ear: New York, NY, 212-970-4000
~ Willis Eye Hospital: Philadelphia, PA, 215-928-3000

South

~ Florida Society of Ophthalmology: Jacksonville, FL, 904-998-0819

HOW TO FIND PARTICIPANTS



LOCAL OPTOMETRISTS BY REGION

Mid-Atlantic

~ Maryland Optometric Association: Baltimore, MD, 410-727-7800

Northeast

~ Eye Institute of Philadelphia, College of Optometry: Philadelphia, PA
Peggy Shelly, 215-276-6000

~ New England Eye Institute: Boston, MA, 617-262-2020

~ SUNY College of Optometry: New York, NY, 212-938-4001

South

~ North Carolina Board of Optometry: Wallace, NC, 910-285-3160

~ Texas Optometric Association: Austin, TX, 512-707-2020

Southwest

~ New Mexico Optometric Association: Taos, NM, 575-751-7242

HOW TO FIND PARTICIPANTS

LOCAL LOW VISION THERAPISTS BY REGION

Mid-Atlantic

- ~ Low Vision Center: Bethesda, MD
Terry Eason, 301-951-4444, Terry@lowvisioninfo.org

Midwest

- ~ The Chicago Lighthouse: Chicago, IL,
Dominic Calabrese, 312-666-1331, dominic.calabrese@chicagolighthouse.org
- ~ Minnesota Low Vision Store, Philips Eye Institute: Minneapolis, MN, 612-775-8967

Northeast

- ~ The Lighthouse: New York, NY, 212-821-9384

Pacific Northwest

- ~ Greater Eastside Lions Low Vision Clinic: Bellevue, WA, 425-558-4228

Southwest

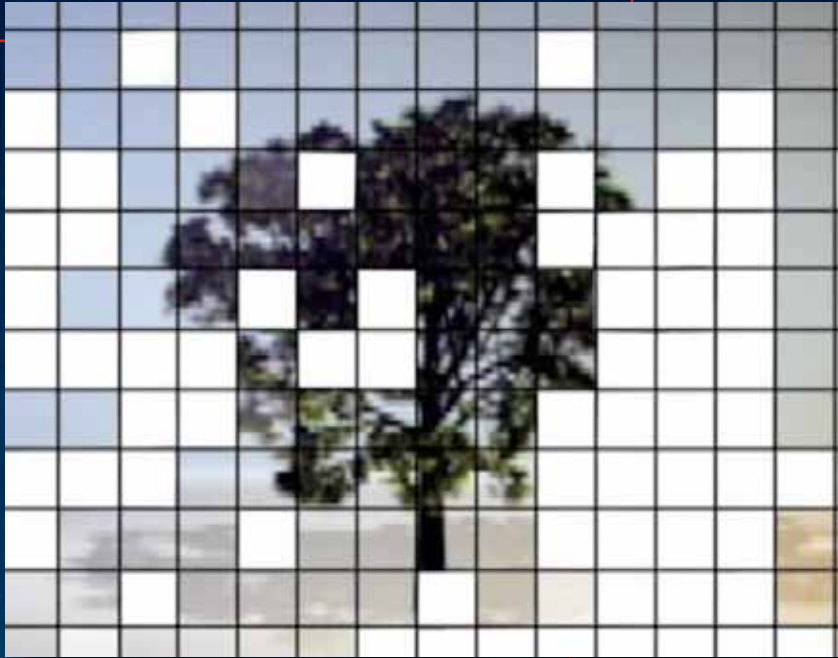
- ~ Low Vision Resource Center: Mesa, AZ, 480-924-8755
Dr. Lynn Noone, lynn@lowvision.com
- ~ Low Vision Services of Southern Colorado: Colorado Springs, CO,
Dr. Theune, 719-471-3200, twtheune@prodigy.net

West Coast

- ~ M.V.T. Visual Rehabilitation Center: Sacramento, CA
Dr. Cole, 916-731-5503, mvtlv@softcom.net



HOW TO FIND PARTICIPANTS



NATIONAL BLIND ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS:

National Federation of the Blind

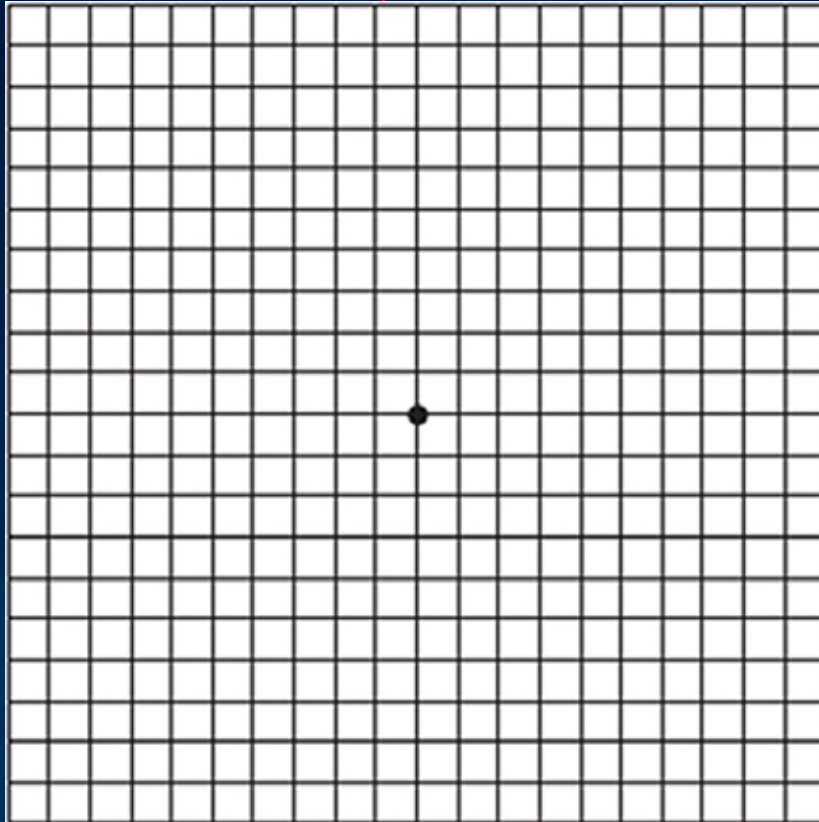
~ Tel: 410-659-9314

American Foundation for the Blind

~ Tel: 212-502-7600

American Council of the Blind

~ Tel: 202-467-5081



VISION CHECK-UPS AT THE SCREENING

Ophthalmologists and optometrists at the screenings can offer quick exams for the audience.

Amsler grids to spot macular degeneration can be handed out at the entrance. You just might get someone into treatment early!!!

You can provide an **informational sheet** with what signs and symptoms should send someone to an eye care professional.

The screening can be supplemented with a list of local eye care professionals and their contact information.

Local **radio and television** stations along with newspapers are essential to get the word out about **Going Blind** and the issues of vision impairment.

The **health, science and lifestyle editors** at local news outlets are great sources to aid the film's promotion. The screening will greatly benefit from press involvement.

Below is the template of a letter for a local newspaper or radio and TV station.

Dear Editor,

*I'm writing you regarding **Going Blind** and **Going Forward**, a worldwide outreach effort to educate and inform the public about how to prevent, treat and combat vision loss.*

*Did you know that 45 million people are blind and 269 million have some form of low vision? Yet, **80% of blindness is avoidable and therefore readily treatable and/or preventable.**¹*

*Aging populations and lifestyle changes mean that chronic blinding conditions such as diabetic retinopathy and age-related macular degeneration are projected to rise exponentially. One problem is that **without effective, major intervention, the number of blind people is projected to increase to 76 million by 2020.**² Also, an estimated 70% of visually impaired people are not being referred to Low Vision Therapy and Rehabilitative training that can give them their lives back.³*

*To help people in our community understand what they can do, on (date, time and place) our organization is having a community screening of **Going Blind**, the latest work by Peabody award-winning producer/director Joseph Lovett. The film is a hopeful look at the world of vision loss and blindness. We hope you can let your readership (or viewers) know about the film, WHICH raises important **QUESTIONS** about the sighted world's perception of sight loss.*

Clips from the film are available for you to use in your programming. And many of the inspiring characters are willing to speak to the press.

Thank your for you time.

** An editable version of this letter to your constituents is available at www.goingblindmovie.com*

¹ Source: The Vision Company; Issue 4, 2009

² Source: Vision 2020: Joint program of the World Health Organization and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness

³ American Foundation for the Blind

SALIENT FACTS ABOUT VISION LOSS



1) Though most vision loss cannot be replaced, visually impaired people can improve the quality of their lives substantially through **LOW VISION THERAPY**, a term most people have never heard of.

2) There are numerous available technologies such as JAWS and KURZWEIL that will read out loud what is on the computer screen. And, there are computer pads that provide Braille translations of what is on the screen!

3) 70% of visually impaired people who could be working are not because they do not know what help is available to them.⁹

4) The Veterans Administration is one of the leaders in vision rehabilitation – Providing services to eye wounded soldiers as well as aging veterans.

5) More than 4 times as many veterans are coming home with significant eye injuries than with lost limbs.¹⁰

6) Only one third of blinded veterans take advantage of vision rehabilitation. Only **49,000** of **160,000** Blind vets use the system.¹¹

*Going Blind profiles **Steve Baskis, a young Iraq War vet**, following him from rehabilitation to the beginning of independently living. Now Steve is married, mountain climbing, training for the Paralympics and lecturing around the country.*

7) The majority of guide dogs are provided for free. Despite how much they may improve one's quality of life, only 1 to 2% of people who are visually impaired use a guide dog.¹²

⁹ National Center for Health Statistics (1998), National Health Interview Survey--Disability Supplement, 1994-95

¹⁰ The Blinded Veterans Association

¹¹ Source: VeteransEyeCare.com, interview with Tom Zampieri, director of government relations for the Blinded Veterans Association

¹² The Seeing Eye: <http://www.theseeingeye.org>

SALIENT FACTS ABOUT VISION LOSS



8) The word **BLIND** is a misleading term. It suggests that someone sees nothing at all, when in fact, the vision loss spectrum is vast. Most people fall somewhere in between.

9) As you will see in the film, it can be difficult to know if you have lost vision since your brain fills in where you don't see. It also makes it difficult for a person with vision loss to report further loss to the doctor.

10) Blindness is often preventable. **EARLY DETECTION** can prevent or slow down vision loss from glaucoma. There are treatments now for wet age-related macular degeneration. This stresses why we need to have our eyes examined regularly.

11) **The first successful gene therapy** trials are underway to treat a form of retinitis pigmentosa, a genetic condition and the leading cause of blindness. The therapy was first tried on Briards, a French sheepdog, a few years ago and is now restoring sight to patients in clinical trials.

12) **Charles Bonnet Syndrome (CBS)** is a condition most often seen in elderly patients with macular degeneration where these patients experience visual hallucinations. For years, many people describing these symptoms were written off as mentally ill. Now we understand that CBS is just another part in the ongoing conversation about vision loss.

Prejudice faced by the visually impaired, ignorance of the general public towards blindness and the perseverance of the blind are also worthwhile subjects to bring to light.

*These topics can serve as possible news stories in the lead up to a screening in your area.

LOVETT PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS
GOING BLIND**ABOUT THE FILM**

Going Blind is a unique documentary film that increases public awareness of sight loss and low vision issues profoundly affecting the lives of more and more people and those who love them.

Documentary film director and journalist Joe Lovett has glaucoma, a disease that robs 4.5 million people of their vision world wide. Over the years, Joe has lost a significant amount of vision and in his concern about how to deal with more vision loss, he has started to talk with people who have already lost theirs; people who have lost their sight through blinding diseases like diabetic retinopathy and macular degeneration, others through infection and accidents.



HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO PROMOTE SCREENING

Going Blind's website offers compelling clips from the film that any organization can use to help promote the screening event. The film has an active Facebook¹³ and Twitter¹⁴ where local screening events can be requested or announced.

Additionally, numerous organizations have already pledged to mutually promote the film on their websites and blogs, many of which are listed at visionaware.org, offering a powerful – and free – online publicity resource for any organization.

Visit our website:

www.GoingBlindMovie.com

¹³ <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Going-Blind/50959037739>

¹⁴ <http://twitter.com/goingblindmovie>



OTHER ACTIVITIES

SCHOOL VISITATIONS with people using guide dogs or canes are always informative. There they can answer school children's questions on how one navigates without sight. The Seeing Eye in Morristown, NY (973-539-4425, info@seeingeye.org) has a database of guide dog users in communities throughout the country.

"MEET AND GREETs" are great events where sighted adults and blind and visually impaired people can come together. It gives sighted individuals the opportunity to finally ask blind people questions that they have always wondered about but were too afraid to ask. It is an enlightening way to reinforce how much we all really share and eliminate the prejudices many of us unknowingly hold.

DINING IN THE DARK¹⁵ is a great way to understand firsthand what it's like to live with visual impairment. Ask a local restaurant to serve guests blindfolded with a visually impaired person hosting each table.

¹⁵ <http://www.darkdiningprojects.com/>

ABOUT GOING BLIND

Peabody Award-winning producer/director Joseph Lovett of Lovett Productions, Stories & Strategies has been losing vision to glaucoma. In an attempt to gain a better understanding of how to deal with further vision loss, he spent 5 years meeting and talking with people who had already gone through the process. Through their generosity and insight, Joe comes to understand that losing vision is not the end of the world. The film straightforwardly confronts the fears and prejudices about the blind that are so subtly a part of our every day lives– noticed only by someone who is losing his or her vision. Here are brief bios of the characters of **Going Blind**.



Atlanta born **Jessica Jones** and Joe met on the street when Jessica was training her seeing-eye dog Chef. A young, beautiful and talented artist who had been teaching in the New York City public school system, Jessica was distraught over the lack of encouragement and opportunities after, at 32, she lost her sight to diabetic retinopathy in just 8 months. During the filming process Jessica secured a job teaching art at a school in the Bronx for blind children with multiple disabilities.



Emmet Teran is an eleven year old (when filmed) with low vision from albinism, a condition he inherited from his father. Emmet works with a comedy troupe after school in Manhattan and uses humor to dismiss some of the hurts a child encounters from his peers.



Ray Kornman, at age 29, discovered he had retinitis pigmentosa, an incurable eye disease that would leave him blind by the age of 40. After learning there were many services for the blind, Ray's life changed when he got his guide dog at the Seeing Eye in Morristown. Now, secure in his condition and content with his life, Ray's mission is to spread the message about the power of guide dogs.



Peter D'Elia, a New Jersey architect, had lost vision in his left eye to macular degeneration. His career was in jeopardy when he noticed that he could not see out of his good right eye. In his eighties, Peter was diagnosed again with age-related macular degeneration. Peter's passion for architecture gives him the drive to continue working and new medication for wet macular degeneration restored his sight.



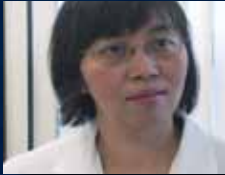
Pat Williams is a legally blind woman still struggling with her place in the sighted world as well as in the visually impaired community. She works as a program support assistant at the VA center in New York City. The enlarged type on her computer screen has helped her flourish in her job. While at times she needs some help getting around, Pat is a fiercely independent woman who does not let her disability define her.



Texas native **Steve Baskis** was 22 and Private First Class in the Army when a roadside bomb north of Baghdad hit his vehicle. Steve was injured from shrapnel all over his body and nerve damage left him blind. He spent weeks rehabbing at Hines Rehabilitation Center outside of Chicago having orientation and mobility training. He now looks to move forward despite his condition and start a new life.



Dr. Robert Ritch is a Surgeon Director and the Chief of Glaucoma Services at New York's Eye and Ear Infirmary and a Professor of Clinical Ophthalmology at the New York Medical College. Dr. Ritch, a leading voice on glaucoma, has authored several major books on the disease as well as hundreds of scientific papers. The film documents four years Dr. Ritch and Joe worked together treating the latter's glaucoma.



Dr. Dong Feng Chen is an Associate Scientist at the Schepens Eye Research Institute as well as an Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology at Harvard Medical School. Much of her work focuses on the optic nerves of mammals. During a meeting at Schepens Dr. Chen explains to Joe that her research is aimed at gaining a better understanding of the effect of and permanence disease and/or damage has on the optic nerve.



Gerald Schuffer is the Service Chief at the Hines Blind Rehabilitation Center at the Hines VA hospital in Oak Park, Illinois. He has worked at Hines since the Vietnam War and works closely and passionately with the veterans that come through the center. The film highlights Jerry's relationship with Steve Baskis as well as all the veterans at Hines.



Dr. Bruce Rosenthal is an Adjunct Professor at Mt. Sinai Hospital and State College of New York College of Optometry. He is also the Chief of Low Vision Programs at Lighthouse International. Dr. Rosenthal has worked with the Lighthouse for over 35 years. He has written seven books on an array of vision related topics and still lectures internationally. Dr. Rosenthal helps Joe grapple with his vision loss and take advantage of the many resources in the low vision community.



Dr. Michael Fischer is a Low Vision certified Optometrist working at Lighthouse International. He is also the Chief of Optometry Service and the Department of Veterans Medical Affairs in Northport, New York. From 1992 until 2006, Dr. Fischer was the Director of Low Vision Services at the Lighthouse. In the film, he treats Emmet and enlightens Joe by demonstrating the positive effect of Low Vision therapy. Dr. Fischer specializes in pediatric optometry and is a fellow at the American Academy of Optometry.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT GOING BLIND



"As ophthalmologists, our overriding goal is to treat, prevent and cure vision loss. Despite best efforts, we cannot always prevent vision loss or sadly, blindness. Your film helps patients understand the options and opportunities for those blind or with severely limited vision, allowing them to lead productive and happy lives. It's an uplifting story.....We will happily promote the documentary and your efforts to our Eye M.D.s through our SmartSight program and to the public via the Academy's EyeSmart Campaign (www.geteyesmart.org)."

~ David W. Parke II, MD, CEO, American Academy of Ophthalmology

*"It is a rare occurrence when one project brings together so many of the issues that individuals who are visually impaired and their families face each day. That is what you have achieved with your new film entitled **Going Blind**"*

~ Peter Williamson, The Jewish Guild for the Blind

*"**Going Blind**" covers every concern about losing vision, but it also offers important information and hope...It reinforces the concept that knowledge is power."*

~ Dan Roberts, Director of Macular Degeneration Support

*"**Going Blind** is truly needed to educate the medical community and the general public ... Your film not only informs, but gives hope to the millions of people who could benefit, if only they knew where to turn."*

~ Nancy Miller, Executive Director of VISIONS Services for the Blind

"The majority of individuals, in the early stages of vision loss, are simply unaware of the specialists, services and resources available to help them. This is one reason why a very small percentage of individuals with vision loss reach out for vision rehabilitation services -- your film provides incentive to change that!"

~ Anne Yeadon, Executive Director, AWARE & VisionAWARE.org



CONTACTS

Outreach Coordinators

Oliver Mosier at 212-242-8999 x10

Logan Schmid at 212-242-8999 x23

Joe Lovett at 212-242-8999 x 27