

GOING BLIND



AND

GOING FORWARD

Outreach Toolkit



Introduction

What is GOING BLIND?

GOING BLIND is a documentary film by Peabody Award-winning producer/director Joseph Lovett, that looks at each aspect of vision loss: detecting, treating, and coping.

Joe Lovett has glaucoma, a disease that robs 4.5 million people worldwide of their vision. After years of slowly losing his sight, Joe decides to take action: to investigate how people all over the country respond to vision loss. His search begins in his home of New York City with people Joe meets on the streets, and gradually leads him to places and people around the country, all of different ages and backgrounds. Each has a fascinating story about dealing with the vision loss caused by sight-robbing diseases, infections, and accidents.

How to use “Going Blind and Going Forward”

Going Blind and Going Forward is an outreach toolkit created to help you expand on your experience after viewing GOING BLIND.

This information will help you to:

- Organize a screening
- Hold a panel discussion
- Foster change in the low vision and blind community

Sample Invitations

You can customize for colleagues, organizational partners and guests:

You are invited to a special screening of **GOING BLIND**

At (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 discussion 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.

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 **GOING BLIND** a highly-praised documentary film about vision loss and how to prevent it, detect it early, treat it properly, and learn to cope with it. 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.

Film screenings also provide professionals from different fields the opportunity to connect and talk about how better coordination of professional services and early 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 two 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 and synagogues, schools, retirement homes, hospitals and corporate conference rooms are all great places to host a screening. Let's hear your ideas!

How To Organize A Screening

An invitational screening of GOING BLIND sponsored by local organizations can raise funds and awareness of the issues surrounding vision loss.

Screenings locations can include:

- Local theaters (speak to the manager about donating the space)
- Community centers
- School auditoriums
- Libraries
- Homes

Raise money for your organization by selling tickets to screenings, soliciting sponsorship from local businesses/institutions, and selling ads inside your event's printed program.

Lions Clubs and many other community organizations have hosted screenings of GOING BLIND. You can approach these organizations about offering volunteers to help with your screenings. They may also be able to suggest a venue for the screening and help with catering for the event.

Obtain a DVD screener of GOING BLIND at the institutional price of \$295, plus shipping and handling, from goingblindmovie.com.



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.

Possible panel participants include:

- Ophthalmologists
- Optometrists
- Low Vision Therapists (LVT)
- Vision Rehabilitation Therapists (VRT)
- Orientation and Mobility Therapists
- Representative from Local Advocacy Groups
- Blind or Visually Impaired People with a Guide Dog or a Cane

By putting a face to blindness we remove the veil of prejudice and ignorance.

How To Get Publicity

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.

How to Find Participants

National Organizations

American Academy of Ophthalmology

aao.org

(415) 561-8500

American Council of the Blind

acb.org

(202) 467-5081

American Foundation for the Blind

afb.org

(212) 502-7600

American Optometric Association

aoa.org

(800) 365-2219

Lions Clubs International

lionsclubs.org

(630) 571-5466

National Federation of the Blind

nfb.org

(410) 659-9314

The Veterans Administration at the Hines
Rehabilitation Center

hines.va.gov

(888) 598-7793

By Region: Northeast

Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary

Boston, MA

masseyeandear.org

(617) 523-7900

New England Eye Institute

Boston, MA

newenglandeye.org

(617) 262-2020

New Hampshire Association for the Blind

Concord, NH

sightcenter.org

(603) 224-4039

New York Eye and Ear Infirmary

New York, NY

nyee.edu

(212) 979-4000

SUNY College of Optometry

New York, NY

sunyopt.edu

(212) 938-4000

Lighthouse Guild

New York, NY

lighthouse.org

(800) 284-4422

The Eye Institution – Salus Health

Philadelphia, PA

teivision.com

(215) 276-6000

Wills Eye Hospital

Philadelphia, PA

willseye.org

(215) 928-3000

By Region: South

Bascom Palmer Eye Institute

Miami, FL

bascompalmer.org

(305) 326-6000

Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins

Baltimore, MD

hopkinsmedicine.org/wilmer

(410) 955-5080

**Richard E. Hoover Rehabilitation Services
for Low Vision and Blindness at the Greater
Baltimore Medical Center**

Baltimore, MD

gbmc.org

(443) 849-2000

Maryland Optometric Association

Baltimore, MD

marylandeyes.org

(410) 486-9662

Low Vision Center

Bethesda, MD

lowvisioninfo.org

(301) 951-4444

North Carolina Board of Optometry

Wallace, NC

ncoptometry.org

(910) 285-3160

Florida Society of Ophthalmology

Jacksonville, FL

mdeye.org

(904) 998-0819

Texas Optometric Association

Austin, TX

texas.aoa.org

(512) 707-2020

By Region: Midwest

Eye Physicians and Surgeons of Chicago

Chicago, IL

eyechicago.com

(773) 525-8700

The Chicago Lighthouse

Chicago, IL

chicagolighthouse.org

(312) 666-1331

Envision

Wichita, KS

envisionus.com

(316) 440-1500

**Minnesota Low Vision Store at the
Philips Eye Institute**

Minneapolis, MN

mnlowvision.com

(612) 775-8967

Alphapointe Association for the Blind

Kansas City, MO

alphapointe.org

(816) 421-5848

By Region: West

UCLA Stein Eye Institute

Los Angeles, CA

uclahealth.org/eye

(310) 825-5000

The Smith Kettlewell Eye Research Institute

San Francisco, CA

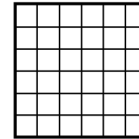
ski.org

415-343-2000

How to Have Vision Check-Ups At Your 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!!!



Provide an informational sheet with the 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.

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 technologies available such as screen reader software based on optical character recognition (OCR) that will read out loud what is on the computer screen. AND there are computers 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.¹

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.²

6

Only one third of blinded veterans take advantage of vision rehabilitation.

Only 49,000 of 160,000 blind vets use the system.³

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

Most of guide dogs and guide dog training are provided free and many people report an improvement in their quality of life! Yet only 1 to 2% of people who are visually impaired use a guide dog.⁴

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 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.

1. National Center for Health Statistics (1998), National Health Interview Survey—Disability Supplement, 1994-95
2. The Blinded Veterans Association
3. Source: VeteransEyeCare.com, interview with Tom Zampieri, director of government relations for the Blinded Veterans Association
4. The Seeing Eye: theseeingeye.org

How to Use Social Media to Promote Screening

Going Blind's [website](#) will offer compelling clips from the film that any organization can use to help promote the screening event. The film has an active [Facebook](#) 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.

 GoingBlindMovie

Other Activities

School visitations

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”

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 Dark

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 as a host at each table.

About Going Blind

Peabody Award winning producer/director Joseph Lovett of Lovett 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 five years meeting talking with people who have already been 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 everyday lives– noticed only by someone who is losing his or her vision.

Here are brief bios of the characters of GOING BLIND:



Jessica Jones

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



Emmet Teran

Emmet Teran is an eleven year old with low vision from albinism, a condition he inherited from his father who also had to deal with extremely low vision. 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

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 the Seeing Eye in Morristown, New Jersey. 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

Peter D'Elia, an architect for over thirty years in New Jersey, 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. Though at an age when most are content with living sedentary lives, Peter's passion for architecture gives him the drive to continue working and new medication for wet macular degeneration was available to restore his sight.



Pat Williams

Pat Williams is a legally blind woman still struggling with her place as a member of 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.



Steve Baskis

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

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 Glaucoma as well as hundreds of scientific papers. The film documents four years Dr. Ritch and Joe worked together treating with the latter's glaucoma.



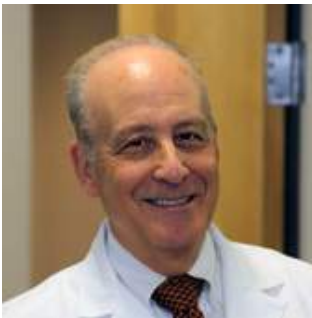
Dr. Dong Feng Chen

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 Schutter

Gerald Schutter was 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

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

Dr. Michael Fischer is a Low Vision certified Optometrist working at Lighthouse Guild. 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.

Press

“ 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 (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

Contact



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