



News Release

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Contact: Lorraine Lidoff

(508) 240-6510

llidoff250@comcast.net

New Association to Promote Vision Rehabilitation

Alexandria, Va. (April 15, 2004) -- The National Vision Rehabilitation Association (NVRA) was launched today to advance the independence and quality of life for people who are blind or partially sighted. Its goal is to expand access to quality vision rehabilitation services.

"The National Vision Rehabilitation Association is dedicated to ensuring the availability of vision rehabilitation services, provided by highly qualified professionals, to all Americans who need them," said Barbara Silverstone, DSW, Chair of the NVRA Board of Directors and President and CEO of Lighthouse International. In announcing NVRA, Silverstone noted that the new entity aims to provide a vehicle for the common interests of vision rehabilitation service providers – vision rehabilitation agencies, ophthalmologists, optometrists, low vision clinics, hospital outpatient low vision services, and others – in promoting services, standards and public awareness. NVRA will advocate for health insurance and other types of funding, and for public policies that assist people with vision impairment.

"Vision impairment has been identified as one of the leading causes of lost independence among older people. By restoring functional ability and safety, vision rehabilitation prevents the personal tragedy and high medical costs of lost independence. As just one example, preventing vision-related falls that result in hip fractures could save hundreds of millions of dollars a year," stated Lorraine Lidoff, who will serve as Executive Director. "We will work to increase access to high quality services and to increase public awareness."

Lidoff noted that NVRA's importance is underscored by the caliber of its founding leaders: Anita Shafer Aaron, Rose Resnick Lighthouse; Steve Barrett, Pittsburgh Vision Services; Donald LoGuidice, Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired; June Mansfield, Community Services for the Blind and Partially Sighted; Linda Merrill, ENVISION; Lee Nasehi, CITE–The Lighthouse for Central Florida; Barbara Silverstone, Lighthouse International; George Theriault, New Hampshire Association for the Blind. NVRA grew out of the National Vision Rehabilitation Cooperative, a coalition established in 1991 to strengthen the provision of vision rehabilitation services.

NVRA has established a national headquarters in the Washington, DC area and will hold its inaugural meeting in June. A nationwide membership recruitment effort has been launched. For additional information about NVRA and membership, contact Lorraine Lidoff.

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