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Cleveland Sight Center, Tri-City Consortium On Aging and Mayfield Heights to Partner on Vision Rehabilitation Program at Villa Serena

EnVision Independence East to Benefit area Residents who are Blind or have Low Vision

CLEVELAND, OH – March 18, 2009 – Cleveland Sight Center is pleased to announce the introduction of a free, community-based vision rehabilitation and assistive technology training program, EnVision Independence East, at Villa Serena in Mayfield Heights. The program is being offered to area senior citizens in partnership with the Tri-City Consortium On Aging and the corresponding cities of Highland Heights, Lyndhurst and South Euclid, in addition to neighboring Mayfield Heights. The participating communities have agreed to make transportation available to residents within those cities.

This innovative vision rehabilitation program is modeled after a highly successful pilot program Cleveland Sight Center launched in Lakewood in 2007. Program participants, who were all seniors with various levels of vision loss, all learned to live more safely and independently. Participant David Bliss shared how much the program has benefited him, and that despite his macular degeneration, he is now able to once again enjoy reading the Bible and watching football on television with the use of adaptive aids he learned about, and obtained through, Cleveland Sight Center. Mr. Bliss stated, "It's the little things that are helping me to live a better quality of life."

For many years Cleveland Sight Center has helped individuals who are blind or visually impaired learn rehabilitative daily living skills to help them live more independently. This training is available at Cleveland Sight Center's University Circle location, at in-home client visits, in Lakewood and now in Mayfield Heights as well.

EnVision Independence East, an interactive program, will be presented in a class-like setting in an efficiency apartment at Villa Serena. There is no cost for the classes, which are being funded through a grant from The Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation. Area senior citizens who are blind as well as those who are visually impaired due to macular degeneration, glaucoma, and other eye diseases, are encouraged to participate.

Each program session will last seven weeks, with the first session beginning on Thursday, March 26th. The classes will be held on Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and on Fridays from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., with up to seven participants at a time. Licensed social workers and rehabilitative professionals, including rehabilitative specialists who are blind, teach the classes. The apartment at Villa Serena will be furnished with special adaptive equipment and low vision aids, such as magnifiers and talking clocks. Each participant will receive a customized recommendation for specific low vision/vision rehabilitation aids, and will have the option to request in-home follow up.

Group counseling and mobility skills (techniques to navigate the physical environment within and outside of the home) will be included in the program. Assistive technology training in Villa Serena's library will complement the daily living skills training. Cleveland Sight Center staff will introduce desktop video magnifiers, large text and other software programs designed to enable individuals with vision loss to communicate effectively using the latest computer technology.

Cleveland Sight Center will also provide drivers, social workers, activity directors and others in support roles associated with this program with sighted guide training at no cost to their city or employers. This training will teach them how to safely escort and interact with individuals who are blind or have low vision.

"The change in a client's confidence and outlook on life once they have completed their vision rehabilitation is remarkable," says Peggy Keating, Director of Senior and Outreach Services at Cleveland Sight Center. "We hope to continue to expand this program to communities throughout Northeast Ohio."

Interested area residents who are blind or have low vision should contact Debi Welsby at 216.658.4674.

About Cleveland Sight Center

Cleveland Sight Center, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) agency founded in 1906, provides people of all ages who are blind or visually impaired with educational, rehabilitative, preventative and many other vision support services. These services also include recreational activities, such as sailing, golf, beep-baseball, crafts and more, and a camp, Highbrook Lodge, in Chardon where campers of all ages can enjoy summer fun. Cleveland Sight Center is a CARF-accredited vision rehabilitation facility and depends on the generous support of corporations, foundations and individuals to provide life-changing services to individuals and families impacted by sight loss.

For more information visit www.clevelandsightcenter.org, or call 216.791.8118.

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