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About Us

Founded in 1936, the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington (POB) is the largest local prevention of blindness agency in the United States, dedicated to the improvement and preservation of sight by providing services, education, advocacy and innovation.

Executive Director – Michele Hartlove
President, Board of Trustees – Donald A. Gagliano, M.D.
Editor & Designer – Nick Farano
Contributors – Taylor Blackwell, Justin Cohen, Kirsten Dillon, Grace MacKoul, Neshan Naltchayan, Gedalia Vera

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Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington®
233 Massachusetts Avenue NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 234-1010
Year in Review

• Adults screened for glaucoma and acuity – 3,551
• Visitors received free information and resources on our website – 5,473
• Large-print newsletters distributed – 15,550
• Minutes spent with patients at the low vision learning center – 33,840
• New pairs of prescription glasses provided – 2,141
• Children screened for vision problems – 7,440
• Minutes of lectures and support groups provided – 6,839

Message from the President

I am honored to share with you Insight, the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington’s (POB) Annual Report.

In the 81st year of POB's service to the local community, we have accomplished so much, including the move into our beautiful new headquarters on Capitol Hill, where we also opened our second Low Vision Learning Center on the second floor. The new Center allows us to more than double our current capability to improve the lives of those with low vision in the Metropolitan Washington area and fills a gap for this resource in the District.

I personally invite you to read through Insight to learn more about our programs, services, and accomplishments, as well as more about the individuals and families we serve, and our vision for the future. These
highlights represent the pillars of growth and best practices in vision health.

It is an extraordinary privilege to serve as president of this special organization, and I sincerely encourage you to stay connected to our sight-saving work, as it is you, our valued supporters, who provide the foundation upon which we stand and build. You empower us with your generosity and demand the best of us for the thousands of children and families we serve together. Your compassion allows us to fulfill our mission as we provide services, education, advocacy and innovation to those in our community that are most in-need.

Lastly, I want to thank Michele Hartlove for her leadership as executive director of the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington for nearly 20 years and wish her the best in her retirement years. Her legacy will long be ingrained into the heart and soul of POB.

We continue to be extremely grateful for your ongoing support.

Donald A. Gagliano, M.D.
President, Board of Trustees

**Message from the Executive Director**

Little did I know when I began this 19-year journey that being the leader of the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington (POB) would be such an amazing and life changing experience.
I was fortunate to take over after the retirement of Dr. Arnold “Arnie” Simonse, who led POB for 26 years. If I had done absolutely nothing, POB would have still been vital to the Washington community. However, our POB team took the great programs already in place, expanding and strengthening them, while creating new programs.

My decision to retire from POB was not an easy one. I will find it very difficult to leave behind the friends and colleagues with whom I have both worked and learned from during my time at POB. I have been truly blessed with a Board that has provided POB with strong leadership and direction and has continuously supported me with trust and confidence. Of course, I am forever grateful for the support I received from POB’s staff for which these accomplishments over the last 19 years would not have been possible. With the dedication of the POB’s staff, Board, and community supporters, POB has continued to be a dynamic and successful organization with a bright future.

As POB begins its 82nd year of serving the DC metropolitan area, it is a source of great pride and a privilege for me to have served as the organization’s third Executive Director since it was founded in 1936. I am fortunate to have led at an organization that has done so much for the cause of better vision for so many people in need, of different ages and circumstances, in the DC metropolitan area.
In closing, I believe I am leaving an organization that is as strong, or stronger, than it has ever been in its history for a new Executive Director. I hope to remain in contact with as many of my friends and colleagues at POB as possible, so when I leave to start a new chapter in my life, my parting words will not be goodbye, but rather, “See you in my new home in Williamsburg!”

Michele D. Hartlove  
Executive Director

Leadership & Staff

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• William Glew, M.D.
• Howard Silvers
• Arnold Simonse, Ph.D.

Staff
• Michele D. Hartlove, Executive Director
• Suleiman Alibhai, O.D., F.A.A.O., Director, Low Vision Learning Centers
• Carmen Aviles-Reyes, Program Director, Children’s Vision Screening
• Marcy Babitz, Program Director, Children’s Vision Screening
• Taylor Blackwell, Assistant to the Executive Director
• Gloria Cruz, Assistant Manager, Look Again Alexandria
• Jeffrey Elmendorf, Manager, Look Again Resale Shop, Alexandria
• Nick Farano, Public Relations and Fundraising Manager
• Barbara Galitzin, Manager, Look Again Kensington
• Mirazel Gesell, Staff Accountant
• Nancy Lux, Coordinator, Low Vision Learning Center
• Hal Morrison, Program Director, Adult Vision Screening
• Gordon Pracht, Optician, Eyeglasses Clinic
• Margaret Ray, Director, Eyeglasses Clinic
• Lisa Roberts-Swisko, Controller
• Gloria Sussman, Facilitator, Support Groups
• Belinda Weinberg, O.D., Optometrist, Low Vision Learning Centers
• Billie Champ-Lopes, Adult Vision Screener
• Robert Greenbaum, Adult Vision Screener
• Sheila McKelvin, Adult Vision Screener
• Brionna Palmer, Adult Vision Screener
• Patty Cripe, Children’s Vision Screener
• Melinda Facal, Children’s Vision Screener
• Norma Greenbaum, Children’s Vision Screener
• Menawar Khalil, Children’s Vision Screener
• Susan Maines, Children’s Vision Screener
• Jackie L. McCarthy, Children’s Vision Screener
• Leslie Schultz, Children’s Vision Screener
• Alice Tsai, Children’s Vision Screener

GET INVOLVED

Make a Gift
A recurring gift provides sustaining support to ensure our sight-saving programs are always available for those in-need.

• $25/month can provide 50 local community members with free information and resources through the Aging Eye & Macular Degeneration Networks.
• $100/month can provide 35 local community members with free prescription eyeglasses through the POB Eyeglasses Clinic.

To learn more or to establish a recurring gift, contact us at (202) 234-1010.

Donate Goods
POB's Look Again® Resale Shops in Alexandria, Virginia and Kensington, Maryland rely on the donations of high-quality, gently used merchandise to support our mission. Pick-up of large items is available by calling (202) 234-1010. Smaller items can be dropped off during regular business hours at either location. POB also seeks high-quality goods to be used for fundraising, such as part of the annual Night of Vision® gala's silent auction. To learn more about donating goods, contact us at (202) 234-1010.
For a list of items accepted by POB's Look Again Resale Shops, visit youreyes.org/resaleshops.

Volunteer
POB operates Look Again Resale Shops in Alexandria, Virginia and Kensington, Maryland, which help support POB's mission through the sale of high-quality, gently used, donated merchandise. Volunteers are needed for a variety of opportunities like working in the shop, providing customer service, and other duties. POB also seeks volunteers to help in its administrative offices, at health fairs, assisting at fundraising events, and more.

To learn more about volunteering at POB's Look Again Resale Shops, contact us at (703) 683-2558 (Alexandria) or (301) 942-4707 (Kensington). To learn more about volunteering for POB events and programs, contact us at (202) 234-1010.

Corporate Partnerships
POB's corporate sponsors are our partners in preserving and improving people's sight for years to come. There are a variety of ways that businesses can offer their support to POB through both in-kind and monetary donations, including workplace giving campaigns, special events, and group volunteer opportunities. To learn more about corporate partnerships, contact us at (202) 234-1010.

Leave a Legacy
The Vories Society recognizes individuals who have included the Prevention of Blindness Society of
Metropolitan Washington in their estate plans or other planned giving opportunity. Planned gifts are not just for those of a certain income level or extensive financial expertise–anyone who wants to designate gifts while they are living can make a planned gift. A planned gift can take many forms, but the most popular are bequests, life insurance, retirement plans and financial service products. To learn more about leaving a legacy with POB, contact us at (202) 234-1010.

**Early Detection Among Seniors**

Since 2011, the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington has been a valued partner of the District of Columbia Office on Aging (DCOA). DCOA provides programs and services for the District residents over the age of 60.

As the Community Outreach Team Leader, I have had the opportunity to witness the great work of POB. POB provides free glaucoma screenings to hundreds of seniors in the District each month.

Thanks to POB, they are guiding our seniors in the right direction of prevention by providing free screenings. If POB identifies a senior with a vision issue, they work with them and refer them to proper, affordable, and professional help.

Many seniors that we provided services cannot afford to visit an ophthalmologist on their own, and in turn, could develop eye diseases such as glaucoma.
Since there are no symptoms or pain associated with some forms of glaucoma, it is imperative that our seniors receive regular screenings. If treated early, one can often protect their eyes against serious vision loss. Without POB, many of the District's seniors would be without vision care.

On behalf of more than 110,000 senior citizens in the District of Columbia, I'd like to thank POB's donors for their support of the organization.

- Alice Thompson  
  *Community Outreach Specialist Washington, DC*

**Saving Sight in Schools**
The Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington has been working with the Washington Jesuit Academy (WJA) for more than ten years to provide free vision screenings to the Academy's young men. WJA serves boys from low-income and under-served communities in 4th-8th grades.

Each year, the wonderful staff from the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington's Children Vision Screening program screens each of our students and provides those in need with two pairs of glasses that are free to the students.

POB also helps our parents, as they don't have to miss work or take their child out of school to be examined. Due
to the fact that our students are from low economic situations, it is imperative that our students are screened and fitted with glasses each year. This leads to their ability to focus and obtain material which ultimately leads to their success.

Our students are here eleven hours per day, eleven months a year and without clear vision, our students are not able focus in class or accomplish their learning goals.

For example, Weldon Genies, 12, was able to participate in sports well enough without glasses, but was having trouble reading and seeing the whiteboard. Because of POB, he is now better prepared to perform well academically.

Thank you from all of the staff, faculty, students, and families at The Washington Jesuit Academy for your continued support to our students!

- Adrienne Biel, LICSW
  School Counselor
  Washington, DC

**Paying It Forward**

At age four, I was diagnosed with amblyopia, which was so severe that I was considered legally blind. Kids who have it develop good vision in one eye and poor vision in the other.
I was diagnosed after receiving a free vision screening at my preschool, through the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington's Children Vision Screening program. I was fortunate that my parents could afford my treatment and glasses.

That's how my sister, Madison, and I, came up with the idea to start a formal program to help POB collect eyeglasses that can be used in the POB Eyeglasses Clinic to help those in-need.

Our first eyeglass collection boxes were placed at our dad's business and at our school. Over the past ten months, we have placed collection boxes in dozens of schools, businesses, libraries, and offices.

So far, we have collected over 800 pairs of glasses, but we're not stopping there!

My sister and I have also worked to increase people's awareness of the importance of vision screening and eye health.

Giving back and helping people in our community is important. My parents and siblings have set that example for my sister and me.

Today, at age 12, while I still wear prescription glasses, my vision is near-perfect. It feels good to pay it forward and to help the organization that helped me!
- Matthew Denchfield
  Bethesda, MD

To locate a collection location near you, visit youreyes.org/glassesrecycling or contact us at (202) 234-1010.

The Power of Knowledge
I’ve worn glasses as long as I can remember. My parents, who immigrated to the United States from Canton, China, used to say to me in Chinese, “Don’t read so much!” But we didn’t speak English at home and I was so eager to learn about the world I lived in. After school, I would walk to the library every night, just blocks from our apartment in Chinatown, New York City. I was such a librarian’s pet – I knew each and every one of them! Then, I’d come home and would crawl up under a window and read even more, using the light from the streetlight that shined in. I was so dependent on my glasses. My doctor told me I didn’t have to wear them all day, but I wanted to because I wanted to read all day.

I refused to wear my glasses on the day of my wedding. Tony and I are quite the couple. We’re inseparable, and have always done things our own way. Tony appreciates my curiosity and hunger for knowledge. I’ve been coming to POB’s Aging Eye and Macular Degeneration Network events for almost 15 years now, after I had my first cataract surgery. I wanted to have as much information available to me about the condition as possible. I’ve had a
fear of eventually losing my sight ever since I started wearing glasses.

One night, Tony woke up with a terrible headache that he just could not shake. We called 9-1-1 and rushed over to the hospital. The doctor in the emergency room suspected it might be related to Tony’s vision. We brought Tony to his ophthalmologist’s office at 5 a.m. That was the start of our glaucoma journey. Of course, it’s only gotten more complicated since then. Glaucoma has affected everything we do. I’ve never driven, and Tony can’t drive anymore. Now, we rely on other options like Metro Access to get where we need.

I am thankful for POB’s groups and lectures because they give me an outlet to learn so much about glaucoma, and many of the other ailments that can affect our vision. I feel enlightened when I leave here. Although I am lucky that at my age, I can still see particularly well and only wear reading glasses, I feel as prepared as I can be.

- Helen Ang
  Washington, DC

Making Life More Accessible
As Ward Commissioner serving on the District of Columbia's Commission on Aging, a citizen's advisory group tasked with serving as an advocate on behalf of local seniors, I am responsible for finding resources that can positively impact lives.
I first found out about the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington after I attended a support group at Washington National Eye Center at MedStar Washington Hospital Center.

It is my goal to find information that helps the District's seniors, but I often learn a lot myself, as I suffer from low vision. When I learned POB had opened a Low Vision Learning Center on Capitol Hill, I was beyond excited.

Dr. Belinda Weinberg and her team are providing hope to those with low vision. Their goal is to better understand my daily tasks and activities, then work with me to find immediate solutions that improve my ability to complete them.

After my first visit, I felt thoroughly informed and gained a number of practical ideas to help me on a day-to-day basis. I am excited to be able to spread the word about the Low Vision Learning Center with others looking for support and hope!

- Clarence "Buddy" Moore
  Community Advocate
  Washington, DC

To learn more or to schedule an appointment at POB's Low Vision Learning Centers in Alexandria, Virginia or Washington, DC, call (703) 652-7803.
SPECIAL FEATURE
Celebrating 19: The Legacy of an Executive Director

After spending nearly 20 years working in the nation's capital, Michele D. Hartlove, executive director of the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington (POB), will retire in 2018.

Hartlove, the third executive director in the organization’s 82-year-history, came to the Society in 1999 to lead the organization’s sight-saving efforts through the dawn of the new millennium. Since then, the organization has grown dramatically. Many of POB’s programs serve as a standard in the vision health social services sector. Hartlove’s grasp of vision health and related issues established her as a source for organizations including the National Eye Institute (NEI), National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Association of Vision Professionals (NAVP), and AARP.

Understanding the importance of collaboration, Hartlove spent much of her tenure building meaningful relationships with other mission-driven organizations in the area. Under her leadership, POB has partnered with well-respected organizations including Bread for the City, Lions Club International, MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, Washington National Eye Center, and Washington Tennis & Education Foundation, among countless others, to serve those who need POB’s services the most.
“I quickly realized how very dedicated Michele was to POB and all of its sight-saving programs and services when I met her in 2005. Since I have been chair of the Gala for the past five years, we have worked closely together. Not only has she been professionally warm, we have become the best of friends. Michele has been our gift that keeps on giving and she will be terribly missed by POB.”

- Sally A. Pilkerton, POB Board of Trustees Member

Some of the most visible signs of Hartlove’s impact on POB can be seen in the organization’s physical growth. In 2011, POB opened the doors to the Low Vision Learning Center in Alexandria, Virginia. This Center was opened to the low vision community’s unmet need of local personalized rehabilitation programs.

Recognizing the need to provide services to more people in an accessible setting, POB launched the Campaign for the Future and acquired property on Capitol Hill shortly after. Through careful design, keeping accessibility and POB’s mission at the heart of the process, POB completed construction and moved into a new building, located at 233 Massachusetts Avenue NE, in 2016.

Today, POB’s new headquarters facility, the largest space in the organization’s history, is fully operational, providing ample opportunity for the organization to grow and fulfill its mission for years to come.
As we look ahead, Hartlove’s tenure is well worth a look back. This article reviews some of POB’s extraordinary accomplishments.

“There are so many wonderful words to describe you, Michele – those that come to mind are: wise, compassionate, caring, warm, welcoming, dedicated, adaptable, diplomatic, receptive, tactful, calm, visionary, creative…and I could go on. Though our friendship will go on beyond retirement, nevertheless, the ophthalmic community will be left with a void that will be very hard to fill!”
- Penelope Helfgott
  Executive Director, Washington National Eye Center

1999 - Michele D. Hartlove assumes her role as the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington's third executive director.

2000 - POB's first website, YourEyes.org, launches, offering free information about events and resources. Hartlove designed, wrote, and published the website.

2001 - POB creates the Professional Membership program, which recognizes eye care professionals for their commitment to POB's sight-saving work.

2001 - POB's first Celebrity Specs® event is held at the Ambassador of Belgium to the United States' residence, with future exhibits held at Westfield Montgomery, Westfield Wheaton, and the Shops at 2000 Penn.
2002 - POB convenes its first Medical Advisory Committee meeting, where a medical specialist would review each of POB's programs for quality assurance.


2003 - Hartlove serves as chair of the National Eye Institute's celebration of World Sight Day. World Sight Day is an annual day of awareness to focus global attention on blindness and vision impairment.

2003 - Hartlove serves as chair of the National Eye Institute's The Eye Site, an interactive traveling exhibit, which spent a month at four shopping malls in the metropolitan area.

2003 - POB creates the Stargardt's Network, a group allowing those with Stargardt's disease and their families to connect and share resources.

2006 - Hartlove elected to serve as president of the National Association of Vision Professionals (NAVP). NAVP's mission is to improve vision health services and develop professional standards for the field.

2008 - POB hosts its first American Girl Fashion Show®. This fundraising event celebrates the experience of being a girl through a colorful presentation of historical and contemporary fashions.
2009 - POB launches share group partnership with the National Gallery of Art, offering free to people who are blind or have low vision. Tours feature intensive verbal description and tactile elements.

2009 - POB partners with MedStar Georgetown University Hospital's KIDS Mobile Medical Clinic and the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile® to provide free eyeglasses to children throughout the region.

2009 - POB announces an expansion project that will include a new and fully-accessible 5,000-squarefoot headquarters facility, which will include a new Low Vision Learning Center and Community Lecture Hall. This plan allows POB to broaden the reach of its current eye health services to the local community for years to come.

2011 - POB opens the organization's first Low Vision Learning Center (LVLC) in Alexandria, Virginia. The LVLC provides each low vision patient with personalized rehabilitation and resources.

2011 - POB awards its first Vision Research Grant to two researchers investigating stem cell transplantation in its application to treating glaucoma, at the National Eye Institute, National Institutes of Health.

2013 - POB holds a groundbreaking ceremony to commemorate the start of rehabilitation and renovation at the 93-year-old building that is to become POB's new
headquarters in Washington, DC's Capitol Hill Historic District.

2016 - POB moves into its new headquarters facility, located at 233 Massachusetts Avenue NE on Capitol Hill, after spending nearly 40 years in Dupont Circle.

2017 - Executive Director Michele Hartlove announces her retirement in 2018, after 19 years of serving the community.

FINANCES
Transparency, financial accountability, and stewardship of our resources guide us. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016, over $875,000 was spent on program services dedicated to the improvement and preservation of sight. Our audit (available at youreyes.org/annualreport) passed the scrutiny of the independent auditing firm Fitzpatrick, Leary & Szarko.

PLEDGE TO ACCOUNTABILITY AND STEWARDSHIP
The Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington is committed to transparency, the highest standards of financial accountability, and appropriate stewardship of our resources. We are a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization established in 1936. Funds received are carefully monitored to ensure their use complies with donor intent. An annual audit of our finances is conducted by an independent certified public accounting firm and overseen by the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington Board of Trustees.