



Janet Plummer  
Executive Director

## IMPROVING VISION

Low vision and vision impairments are common challenges among seniors and are more than just medical conditions. Low vision means facing new challenges and significant changes in daily routines. Low vision can contribute to a sense of isolation from friends and family, dependence on others for everyday tasks, and frustration when communicating with others.

Millions of seniors face vision challenges, and the Touchmark Foundation has instituted a project to address this issue. Working in three communities (Meridian, Idaho; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; and Appleton, Wisconsin) the Foundation has installed low-vision magnification systems as part of a broader vision health program initiative. Programs include training on use of the system, presentations by local vision health experts, and discussions of other assistive devices that can help address a wide variety of vision challenges.

The Touchmark Foundation strives to provide programs that benefit the physical, social, intellectual and spiritual lives of seniors. In implementing this project, the Foundation expects to achieve this important objective. Seniors using this technology can once again read the daily newspaper, correspond with friends, see pictures of grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and handle the seemingly small but important tasks of life—such as paying bills, writing letters, or reading a recipe.

Evaluation of these three initial projects is an essential part of the program. The Foundation will be carefully monitoring several aspects of the equipment, including frequency and ease of use, effectiveness in meeting vision needs, and durability. While the technology is powerful, it is unaffordable for many seniors on limited incomes. If the program proves as successful as anticipated, it will be expanded to additional communities.

## Low vision doesn't thwart Don Donaldson

Don Donaldson can tell you about life with low vision. Blinded by a dynamite cap explosion at the age of 7, Don's life story is a mix of wild adventure and frustrating isolation. Yet, with his indefatigable optimism and energy, Don has achieved more than many fully sighted peers.

Don received his childhood education at the Washington State School for the Blind in Vancouver, Washington. Following graduation, *(cont. on page 2)*

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## Low vision (cont. from page 1)



Don Donaldson has dedicated his life to helping people. His autobiography is available for sale through the publisher at [www.authorhouse.com](http://www.authorhouse.com). All book royalties are donated to the Foundation for the Washington State School for the Blind to benefit visually impaired students.

at the height of the Great Depression, he and a school friend, also blind, sold brooms door to door to raise funds for college. Don attended the University of Washington, studying prelaw.

Surgery at 21 miraculously restored sight in one eye and gave Don the opportunity to see again. Following the restoration of partial vision, he changed his career goal and decided to become an educator. Don received a master's degree from the University of Washington, did graduate work at Harvard University, and taught at the famous Perkins School for the Blind in Boston. Ultimately, Don became the principal of the Washington State School for the Blind.

Over the years, his life was filled with grand adventures, spurred in part by his zeal and innate impishness. At 92, Don published his autobiography, *What's in a Name*, which describes his extraordinary life. Don never allowed his lack of vision or even the "rules" to restrain him. In retirement, he and his beloved wife Mildred traveled the world on freighters.

Don lost his sight again 15 years ago from glaucoma. A resident at Waterford at Fairway Village, a retirement community in Vancouver, Washington, Don is a tireless advocate for persons with low vision. A lifelong challenge has been to educate the sighted.

"Far too many people with good vision totally, but not intentionally, ignore visually impaired folks, making for them a very lonely world," says Don.

## Macular degeneration touches many

According to the National Institutes of Health, age-related macular degeneration is a leading cause of vision loss in people 60 years of age and older. The condition blurs the sharp central vision one needs for straight-ahead activities, such as reading, sewing, and driving.

For Helen Larsen, the new reading magnification system installed in Sioux Falls, South Dakota (at the Waterford at All Saints retirement community), has reopened a world of reading enjoyment. Helen has been unable to read anything since the onset of macular degeneration. Now, Helen reads the newspaper daily and again is able to delve into a really good book.

"Everything about this equipment is just wonderful," praises Helen, "and it isn't difficult to learn."

Helen is also a willing instructor. She has taught others how to use the equipment and encourages anyone challenged with vision impairment to learn to use the system. "Your ability to use the

*(cont. on page 3)*



Helen Larsen (standing, left) helps Janie Cloud learn to use a video magnification system. Standing in the background is Lillian Stauffacher of South Dakota Visually Impaired, who presented "What Do I Do When I Can't Read the Newspaper Any More?" to a large crowd of interested individuals.

## HONOR ROLL: RECENT DONORS

One of the most impressive features of Touchmark communities is the caring staff, who give their best each and every day. Not surprisingly, then, one of the most generous donor groups to the Touchmark Foundation is the Touchmark community team members. In 2006, the following people contributed to the Foundation's programs through the Employee Payroll Deduction plan. For information about how to set up an employee-giving program for the Foundation, please contact Executive Director Janet Plummer.

### Macular degeneration *(cont. from page 2)*

magnifier improves as you practice," she notes. "The fact that I can now do something that I couldn't do before is a tremendous gift. I am very grateful."

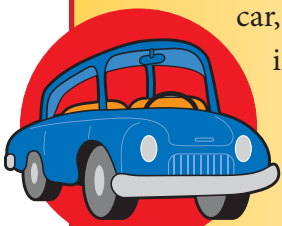
Video magnification systems, such as the Optelec system, allow persons with a wide variety of visual impairments to regain independent reading. The system can magnify type on a page up to 50 times its normal size. This means that a letter in a book that is about one-tenth of an inch in size can appear on the screen as 2.5 inches tall and still be in sharp focus.

In addition, because some eye diseases make certain colors and contrasts more difficult to see, the equipment allows a user to change background and foreground colors to find the most readable and comfortable options. In addition to reading, the system also allows users to look at photographs, read prescription bottles, and perform many other tasks of daily living that can be severely limited by low vision and impairments.

### Donate your vehicle—

car, RV, truck or boat—and provide important programs to improve the lives of seniors.

Contact Executive Director Janet Plummer at 800-796-8744 for more information.



#### Touchmark at Meadow Lake Village

Christine Brookline  
Lisa Bruner  
Tami Cuthill  
Janna Sherwood  
David Wilkinson  
Nathan Wyatt

#### Touchmark at Mt. Bachelor Village

Tom Biel  
Dan Reynolds

#### Touchmark Central Office

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Marcus Breuer  
Marge Coalman, EdD  
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Kathy Harmon  
Tom Moe  
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Nona Phelps, RN  
Janet Plummer  
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#### Touchmark Development & Construction

Joe Billig  
Bruce Dalrymple  
Dan Green  
Bernie Neil  
Tova Purnell  
Pat Young

#### Touchmark on West Prospect

Steven Hilfer  
Amy Jo Powers  
Bobbie Thompson

#### Waterford at All Saints

Angie Rabon

#### Waterford at Fairway Village

Pat Bergin  
Kelly Pope  
Margie Walters

#### Waterford at Harwood Groves

Serena Jiskra  
Deb Magnuson  
Lanier Oxtan

#### Waterford Home Health

Daphne King  
Lorrie Panzeri

#### Waterford on Elizabeth Warren

Sheila Anderson  
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#### Waterford on Saddle Drive

Tonie Boehm

#### Waterford on South Hill

Jeff Bair  
Stephanie Johnston  
Susan Kingsly  
Allison Leverett  
Gail Maddox  
Benjamin Westbrook  
Jeff Wolpert

#### Waterford on West Century

Arlene Farnsworth  
Brooke Krogen  
Rhonda Reese

## Quilters raise funds and awareness for Foundation

From its utilitarian roots as warm clothing for soldiers, quilting has become a popular form of art, design, and décor in homes. Hours of detail work define the finest quality quilts, and they become family heirlooms, often passed from generation to generation honoring the stories and history they carry.

Led by Virginia Will, a group of quilters at a Spokane retirement community is creating one of these extraordinary works of art as a fund-raiser for the Touchmark Foundation. The quilt, started in early 2007, will be offered in a raffle to raise funds and awareness about the Touchmark Foundation's senior programs.

The quilt's design—Cherry Rose—is a replica of one created by Margie Turner Karavitis, a Spokane resident and retired nurse, who won First Place and Best in Arts and Crafts at the Spokane Interstate Fair in 1990 for the original quilt, which now hangs in the Museum of American Quilter's Society in Paducah, Kentucky. Margie is one of about a dozen quilters working on the project.



The current quilt will measure 94 inches by 94 inches, large enough to cover a king-size bed. All hand-stitched, the quilt will be a treasure for generations. The raffle will begin as soon as the quilt is completed.

*Virginia Will (seated), who lives at the Waterford on South Hill retirement community in Spokane, Washington, shows Touchmark Foundation Chair Jean Glanz the beginning blocks of a quilt that will be raffled to raise funds for the Foundation.*

## Your tax-deductible donations to the Touchmark Foundation will support programs to benefit seniors.

YES, I want to help improve the lives of seniors through Touchmark Foundation programs.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Payment of this gift is by:  Check  Visa/MC Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

- I have included the Touchmark Foundation in my will or estate plan.
- Please send me information on how to name the Touchmark Foundation in my will or estate plan.
- Please send me information about the Touchmark Foundation.

Gifts to the Touchmark Foundation are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.