

insights

Spring | Summer 2022

VisionCorps

News for donors and friends of VisionCorps

For more information on services for you or someone you know, please call 866-876-6550.

*Serving Adams, Chester, Lancaster,
Lebanon and York Counties*

“THANKS TO VISIONCORPS, I’M LIVING MY BIRTHDAY EVERY DAY!”

In 2016, Reggie Taylor had a near-death experience, and it profoundly changed his perspective on life. He was the victim of gun violence that left him without sight and sent him into a downward emotional spiral. He credits VisionCorps with helping him get his life back on track.

“I went through a whole lot,” Reggie said. “After I lost my eyes, I didn’t feel whole. I didn’t feel independent. But I’m here, and now, it’s like I’m living my birthday every day!”

Getting around safely is a long-term goal. “I take everything one step at a time,” Reggie said. “I go for walks by myself with my white cane.” He uses landmarks such as bushes, divots in the sidewalk, or the sound of chimes to orient himself. When he makes a mistake, he regards it as an adventure. “I took out the trash yesterday, and my feet didn’t feel the slope. I got turned around, and had to use my cane to get back.” But he’s glad to have solved the problem independently.

Reggie works at improving his skills every day. “The more you stay busy, the better you sleep at night,” he said. He lifts weights and rides his stationary bike. He’s learning to read braille and listens to audiobooks. But he’s happy to let his family do the cooking sometimes. “I just sit back and chill.”

Navigating life without sight is challenging, but rewarding. Reggie is especially grateful to have found a resourceful community through VisionCorps peer support groups. “It’s helped me so much; it’s unbelievable. It’s changed my attitude, because before, I didn’t feel I had anybody I could really talk to. We learn so much from each other.”

“I just take it one day at a time and keep laughing and smiling all the way,” Reggie said. “Nothing is worse than what I’ve already been through. When you come out the other side, you realize that life is more important than anything!”



Reggie Taylor (middle) at the 2022 EyeDrop Event. The challenge helps raise awareness and support for VisionCorps services.

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VisionCorps, is a 501(c)(3) exempt organization. A copy of our financial statement is available upon request by contacting VisionCorps at 244 N Queen Street, Suite 301, Lancaster, PA 17603 or calling 1-717-205-4115. A copy of the official registration and financial information of VisionCorps may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

MESSAGE FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Welcome, summer!

We are more than halfway through 2022 and VisionCorps has been busy helping your friends and neighbors living with vision loss. Your support has made that possible!



As you read Reggie's story, I ask you to consider the ways in which your life can change suddenly and unexpectedly – including vision loss. While some vision loss is an ongoing condition, worsening gradually, some can come on quickly and folks find themselves shocked and unsure of what comes next. There is a psychological factor that also often needs to be addressed – the sudden loss of independence takes its toll.

At VisionCorps, we don't just work to help provide skills and training to the client affected by vision loss – we work with their entire family and surroundings – whether that be in an office environment, retirement community staff, or family – to provide support and encouragement for a successful outcome. Because the effects of vision loss can vary drastically from client to client, every client's route to independence is different and tailored specifically to them.

Reggie is a wonderful example of a client who lost his vision suddenly and unexpectedly, experienced the emotional toll it takes on a person, and has come out on the other side confident, independent and dedicated to continuing to work towards his goals. Reggie participated in our annual fundraiser, the Eye Drop in early June. Prior to the event, Reggie had avoided large public gatherings as he continued to heal. His first venture out, he went big! Surrounded by hundreds of spectators he rappelled from the roof of a 10-story building – and did it with a smile! He is already talking about next year.

Our clients, when faced with what feels like an enormous challenge, dedicate themselves to taking advantage of VisionCorps services so they may continue to thrive in their daily lives. All of VisionCorps' services are provided at no cost to the client thanks to the support of individuals like you. Your support IS changing lives!

Thank you and should you or someone you know be experiencing vision loss that is making it difficult to get through your daily activities, please contact us by dialing 866-876-6550.

Enjoy your summer!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan".

Megan Sofilka Tomscheck

P.S. Now that we have less than half the year remaining, be sure to make your annual eye exam if you haven't already! If you cannot afford an eye exam, contact us by calling 866-876-6550 to ask about our voucher program that provides an eye exam and basic frames and lenses from dozens of participating doctors in your county!

SAVE THE DATE! The Ray Shirk Annual Golf Tournament will be held Monday October 3, 2022 at Conestoga Country Club in Lancaster. For more information, contact Lisa Shirk by calling 717-875-1516.

2022 EYE DROP RECAP

Coming off the heels of our third Eye Drop Rappelling Event, momentum is strong for our event next year! Eye Drop is VisionCorps signature annual fundraising event in which participants commit to raise at least \$1,000 for the opportunity to rappel from the roof of the Holiday Inn in downtown Lancaster. This year, more than 80 participants took on the challenge, met it, and capped off their fundraising efforts with an exhilarating 125 foot rappel!

Funds raised from the Eye Drop benefit VisionCorps services to the community. This year, more than \$135,000 was raised through sponsorships and donations to rappellers. Our goal was to raise \$175,000, and donations are still being accepted via mail or online at www.EyeDrop2022.org (You can also click the link to watch the livestream on the website!) The combined total raised since the event started in 2019 is more than \$450,000!

Participants are able to create their own fundraising webpage. This makes it easy to send a link to family and friends via email or on social media, directing them to your own personalized page to reach your \$1000 (or more!) goal. Donations can also be made offline by mailing in a check or calling with credit card information. We work with each rappeller to support whatever method

of fundraising is easiest for them! We also provide a fundraising toolkit with fundraising ideas, letter templates to personalize, and all the details you need to know for the event. We are also actively seeking sponsors for the next event to offset the expenses so that 100% of donations go to services!

Anyone is welcome to participate as long as two criteria are met: rappellers must weigh between 100 and 300 pounds, and must safely fit in the harness. Children who meet that criteria and are under the age of 18 are able to rappel, with parental or legal guardian permission. This year, rappellers came from all counties we serve – and beyond! We are already planning 2023's event (date to be determined), and if you or someone you know is interested in learning more, call Linda Conyers at 717-393-5894 or email LConyers@visioncorps.net to be added to the list to receive information as it becomes available.



WHY I GIVE

ERIC LONG

“I feel truly blessed to be living in the United States and Pennsylvania,” said Eric Long of Lebanon. “Blessed beyond measure. Remembering that helps me keep things in perspective. My worst day is better than a lot of people’s best day ever. So, to the extent that I can, I try to pass those blessings on to others.” Eric pays it forward through his involvement with VisionCorps and the Lebanon Lions Club.

As a commercial loan officer for Peoples Security Bank & Trust, Eric is always on the lookout for good networking opportunities. About twenty years ago, he became a member of the Lebanon Lions Club. “It was basically a Who’s Who of local business people,” he said. But the organization’s laser focus on helping people in need with impaired vision also attracted him. He chaired the Lebanon County Sight Conservation Subcommittee for upwards ten years, which brought him into close contact with VisionCorps.

For more than 50 years, the Lebanon Lions Club has been an ally to people with sight related issues. In addition to helping fund services, several Lions members have served on VisionCorps’ Board of Directors. “Until I joined the board recently, I didn’t realize how deep VisionCorps’ reach is – how many lives they touch on a daily basis,” Eric said.

When he attended his class reunion, Eric ran into a former classmate who now works for VisionCorps. “I learned that she became legally blind in her mid-

twenties from a degenerative illness. We take our sight for granted.”

Eric was brought up with the adage: to whom much is given, much is required. “My dad taught me by example to maintain a balanced life, have a good work ethic, and do whatever you can to help others.” He hopes that young people, who seem so distracted and overwhelmed with the demands of modern life, will find a way to reap the rewards of service to their community.

Events like the Eye Drop Campaign are a good way to get young people involved. “Last year, I rappelled for the first time,” Eric said. “Frankly, I was scared to death! It took me 15 minutes to step off the building. You have to trust that the harness and the ropes are going to hold you. This year was a little easier, but I still had butterflies in my belly.” His wife Heather livestreamed the event and her coworkers were cheering him on. “She wants to do it with me next year!”

“It’s such a phenomenal, well-run event, and it attracts a lot of spectators,” Eric said. “People want to know, ‘What’s going on here?’ And that provides the perfect opportunity to give a little testimonial for VisionCorps and the impact they’re making in our community.”



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Insights is a publication of VisionCorps Foundation
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Questions?

Please contact **Megan Tomscheck**, VP & Chief Development Officer at **717-205-4115** or email megan@visioncorps.net

Please notify us if your contact information has changed.
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