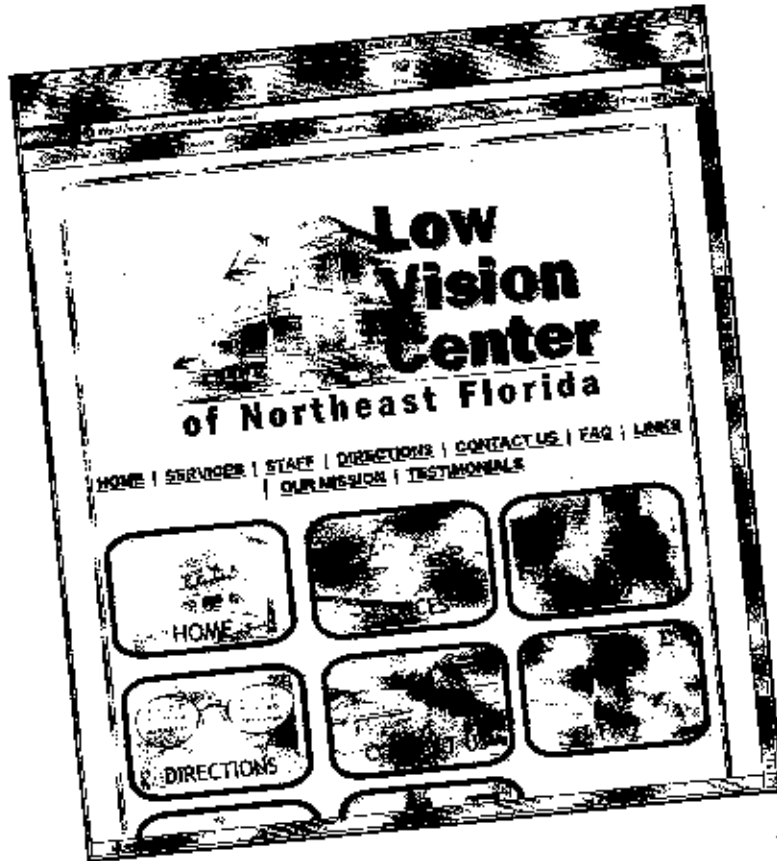


# LOW VISION: FYI



MAY 2008

A LOW VISION NEWSLETTER



## Info on the internet

The most comprehensive website for low vision information in Northeast Florida is now up and available.

It's [www.jacksonvillelowvision.com](http://www.jacksonvillelowvision.com) and is an extensive site with links to other major vision sites, information about local events and FAQs on low vision.

"We've been working on this for a long time," said Dr. Tiffany Owens, director of the Low Vision Center. "It's a great aid for our patients, and also for those who have questions about low vision."

Owens said the site will be frequently updated.

"We welcome suggestions," she said. "This can be the place for those with low vision to share."

[www.jacksonvillelowvision.com](http://www.jacksonvillelowvision.com)

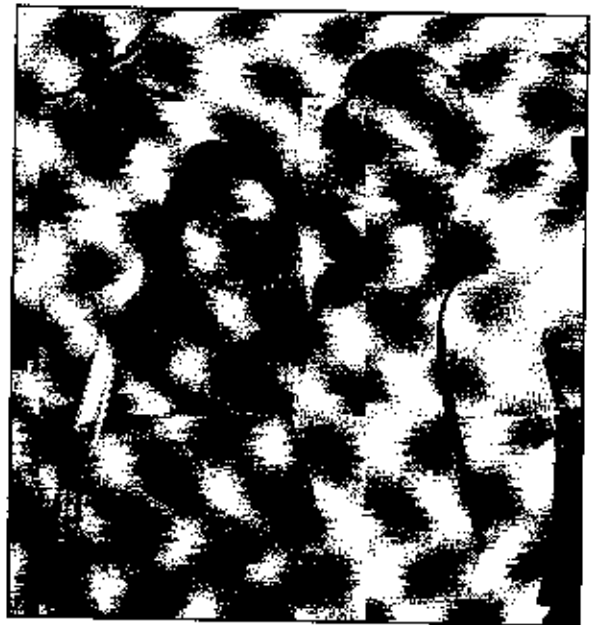
## Center offers new service

The Low Vision Center will now offer in-home visits to assist clients with the proper use of optical devices and insure that prescribed devices are being used appropriately in the home.

Wendy Healy is joining the staff. She most recently has been with Brooks Health but made the move because it would be full-time in assisting those with low vision.

"This is a great step for us," said the Center director, Dr. Tiffany Owens. "This will allow our therapist, Kim Rigdon, to be available at the Center while Wendy can handle the in-home duties."

The Center's diagnostic process remains the same with Dr. Owens handling the examinations and prescribing therapy to Mrs. Rigdon. If more therapy is needed in-home, Mrs. Healy will be assigned to that.



Healy (right) with Dr. Owens

# I See Something You Don't See...

By Tiffany Owens, OD

Director, Low Vision Center

Have you ever seen something that you know is not there, but looks very real?

I have a patient that explains that she finds a "white cat" in her house from time to time. The first time she saw this cat in her house, she tried to "shoo" it out and then proceeded to check that every door and window in the house was closed. She could not figure out how this uninvited pet got in or out of her home. As quickly as the cat appeared, it was gone. She explained that this was very frightening to her at first and she felt as if she was losing her mind. It was something she did not talk about for fear that her friends and relatives might assume it was related to mental dysfunction.

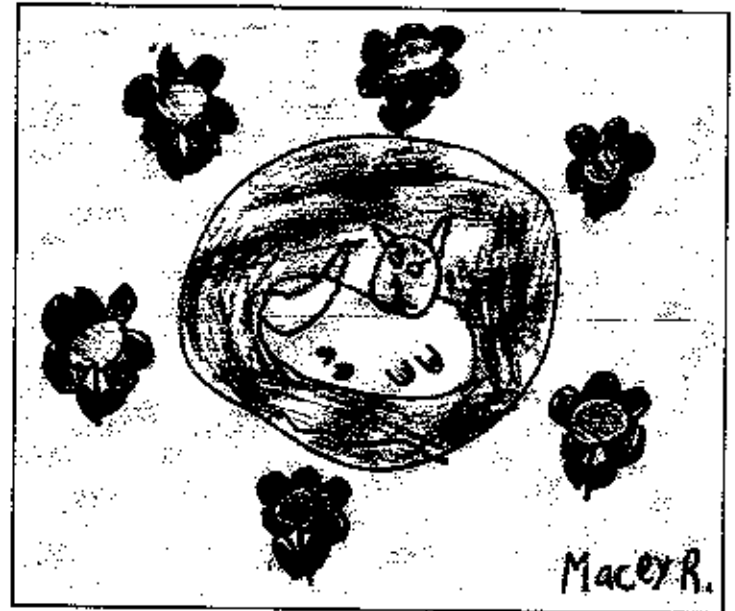
She now accepts that the cat will show up when it pleases and leave when it is ready and she is no longer frightened. Other patients have mentioned seeing plants, flowers, a log cabin and children playing in a field.

What these patients experiences is a common phenomenon but one that is not frequently discussed.

It is called Charles Bonnet Syndrome. Studies show that between 10 and 40 percent of people with low vision experience this phenomenon. Some with low vision may never experience Charles Bonnet Syndrome, some may experience it for only a few months, and some may experience it for years.

Dr. Lylas Mogk reviews the six criteria for Charles Bonnet Syndrome in her book "Macular Degeneration." These are criteria that you can use to determine whether or not you are experiencing this syndrome:

1. They occur when you are fully conscious and wide awake, often during broad daylight.
2. They do not deceive you; you are aware



that they are not real.

3. They occur in combination with normal perception. For example, you may see a sidewalk clearly but find it covered with dots, flowers, or faces.

4. They are exclusively visual and do not appear in combination with any sounds or bizarre sensations.

5. They appear and disappear without obvious cause

6. They are amusing or annoying but not grotesque

The important thing to note with Charles Bonnet Syndrome is that seeing these images is a normal phenomenon. This is simply your brain's way of filling in the blanks that were once filled with visual information.

There is no drug treatment that has been demonstrated to work and, as Dr. Mogk explains, "usually explanation and reassurance are sufficient."

Please do not be afraid to discuss these images with your eye care professional. For further information about Charles Bonnet Syndrome, Dr. Mogk's book has an entire chapter dedicated to this topic and is available at the Low Vision Center.

# Seminar: 'tremendous success'

The 15th annual Low Vision Seminar sponsored by the Eye Research Foundation had a fantastic turnout this year! The seminar was held on a Saturday afternoon for the first time in its history, which appeared to help with transportation, since over 350 people attended!

The seminar started with the Vendor/Organization Expo. A room adjacent to the main ballroom had local organizations and CCTV vendors set up to show equipment and share information. The expo was reopened at the end of the presentation.

The Foundation's president, Dr. W.J. Knauer III, began the presentation portion with an account of running bridges with high winds at the 9.5 mile Jacksonville Gate River Run in extraordinary Kanga boots! He described the crowd's reaction to him being different.

Peter Bianchi was then introduced by Becky Simpson from ILAB. Peter gave a brief report of how he has been successful as a visually impaired person with great determination and help from the different organizations in our area. Peter has been part of corporate America and is now reaping the benefits of working with ILAB in computer instruction.

Our very special keynote speaker, Dr. Lylas Mogk from the Henry Ford Center in Detroit, was then introduced to discuss her book "Macular Degeneration: The Complete Guide to Saving and Maximizing Your Sight".

She gave many tips to minimize your risks and slow the progression of macular degeneration, such as wearing sunglasses and eating lots of omega-3 fatty acids. She also included some humorous excerpts from her patients and her father, who was the inspiration for her and her daughter to write the book.

The event was free to the public and was underwritten by the Foundation.

"It was a tremendous success," said Dr. Knauer, the Foundation's president. "Dr. Mogk is internationally-known and her presentation was outstanding.

"Our Foundation is committed to the Seminar and we were gratified with the positive comments we received."

The Eye Research Foundation was incorporated in 1969 as a non-profit organization dedicated to vision causes in Northeast Florida. It was founded by W.J. Knauer Jr., M.D., Dr. Frances Bartlett Kinne and W. Ashley Verlander, all of whom remain active.

## Mark your calendar!

16th annual Low Vision Seminar

March 7, 2009

Wyndham Jacksonville

# Test your contrast sensitivity

by Kim Rigdon, CLVT  
Low Vision Center

(Third in the series of the "3 B's" - Bigger, Brighter, and now Bolder.)

Bolder refers to contrast, how well something stands out as opposed to its background. A very common goal for our patients is to be able to read the newspaper. Newspaper is printed on recycled paper, which is good for the environment but is not the best contrast for our patients to read. Recycled paper is not bright white and the ink that is used is not very black and bold. This can make newspapers very difficult to read for some patients, even when we introduce magnification.

Patients are always asking our office "What makes your evaluation different from a regular optometrist or ophthalmologist?" One of the many ways our office is unique is that our director, Dr. Tiffany Owens, performs a contrast sensitivity test. This test determines if and how much your eye condition has affected your ability to see things that are not very black and white. It is the basis for what type of device you will be trained to use.

So, what can you do to improve contrast? There are several things that you can do to improve the contrast of what you are seeing and the following are a few examples:

- Using a dark placemat under a white plate can help you to see the edges better or using a white coffee mug to help you to see to pour black coffee.
- Using bold lined paper and a bold tip pen or marker may help you to see the lines and what you are writing easier.
- Most computers have a setting that will allow you to change the contrast of the computer screen and print.

Not Bold

**Bold**

**Bolder**

**Boldest**

Many times our office will introduce yellow acetate filters or sunglasses that have a yellow or orange tint to enhance contrast. If your contrast sensitivity has decreased significantly, it is possible that magnification only may not help you to read something that has poor contrast. Video magnifiers are the only devices that can physically change the contrast of an object or reading material. They can enhance the print image of the newspaper to appear with dark black print on a bright white background. They can even reverse the image to a black background with bright white print, which helps many people to read easier.

This is one of the many reasons that an evaluation by a Low Vision Specialist like Dr. Owens is recommended. Many patients try magnifiers on their own and may be unsuccessful without realizing that they have decreased contrast sensitivity.

*(Kim Rigdon is a therapist at the Low Vision Center.)*

# Coming to the Center

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## MAKING AN APPOINTMENT

It's easier than you believe. Call 389-9989 and our Patient Care Coordinator will make your appointment. If you get a recording, don't worry — you'll get a call-back quickly.

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## OUR LOCATION

We're almost directly across from St. Vincent's Hospital at 2519 Riverside Ave. You can't miss us — we're the historic home painted light blue and white.

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## PARKING

It's right next to the building on the right side. There's a handicap parking spot in front, if you need it.

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## WHAT TO BRING

- Your insurance cards.
- Your Social Security number.
- List of current medications.

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## WHAT YOU'LL DO

Our Patient Care Coordinator will check you in and make sure she has all the correct information.

You'll then meet the Center's director, Dr. Tiffany Owens, who will review your situation and conduct an examination to determine your needs.

The last step is a visit with Kim Rigdon, a certified low vision therapist who will show you devices which can improve your quality of life.

The entire process will take about an hour and a half. If you have someone waiting for you, they'll be comfortable in our easy chairs and there's plenty of coffee, tea and hot chocolate, too.

Before leaving, you'll make an appointment for a follow-up visit.

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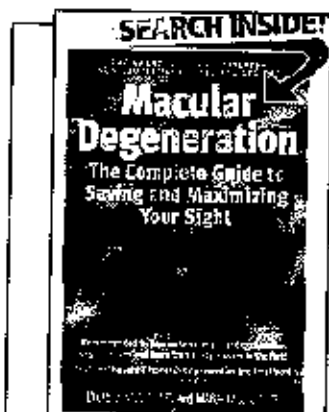
## YOUR FOLLOW-UP VISIT

Your visit to the Low Vision Center doesn't end when you walk out the door — you also need to make a follow-up visit!

We want to make sure equipment recommended is what you need and you are comfortable with their use.

It's also a time to review available resources that can help such as the Talking Books program, Radio Reading Service and support groups.

The follow-up should be about two weeks after your visit.



## Dr. Mogk's book is here

Regarded as one of the most authoritative books ever written on macular degeneration, "Macular Degeneration: The Complete Guide to Saving and Maximizing Your Sight" is now available at the Low Vision Center.

Copies are \$15.95 each and payment will be accepted in cash, check or credit card. All purchases must be made at the Center, 2519 Riverside Ave., but books can be reserved by calling 389-9989.

## Can you help those in need?

The Low Vision Center doesn't turn away patients for inability to pay, but donations are accepted to help fund equipment that some people need.

If you'd like to "sponsor" someone, send a check in any amount to our office. We'll respond with a thank-you letter that also will include the value of your gift, which will be tax deductible.

How much? Any amount will be greatly appreciated, particularly by those who can't pay.

## Check our display of glasses

We've made some changes in the display of eyeglasses at the Low Vision Center. It's now much easier to select your style, so drop by and take a look!

### *The Low Vision Center*

Director

*DR. TIFFANY OWENS, O.D.*

Low Vision Therapist

*KIM RIGDON, CLVT*

Patient Care Coordinator

*CASEY LEATHERMAN*

### *The Eye Research Foundation of Jacksonville*

President

*W.J. KNAUER III, M.D.*

Vice Presidents

*FRANCES BARTLETT KINNE, PH.D.*

*W. ASHLEY VERLANDER*

Secretary - Treasurer

*DEBORAH KNAUER*

President Emeritus

*W.J. KNAUER JR., M.D.*

Executive Director

*FRED SEELY*



## **Low Vision Center**

**of Northeast Florida**

This is a quarterly  
publication of the  
Low Vision Center of  
Northeast Florida,  
a non-profit clinic  
at 2519 Riverside Ave.,  
Jacksonville, Florida 32204.

More information about  
the center is available  
by calling 389-9989.