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Florida Eye Doctor Helps Legally Blind To See Again

Specialist in Low Vision Care helps those with Macular Degeneration to keep reading and driving

By Lois Neinken
Freelance writer



PATIENT NORMA GOLDSTEIN DEMONSTRATING MINIATURE TELESCOPES FOR DRIVING, WATCHING TV, AND THEATER, ETC.

Ft. Lauderdale, Florida—Just because you have macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, or other eye diseases doesn't mean you must give up driving or participating in the activities that make your life full.

Ever look through a pair of binoculars? Things look bigger, closer, and easier to see. Florida Optometrist, Dr. Marc Jay Gannon, is using miniaturized binoculars and telescopes to help people who have lost vision from macular degeneration and many other eye conditions.

"Some of my patients consider me the last stop for people who have vision loss," said Dr. Gannon, a low vision specialist with offices in Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, Boca Raton, West Palm Beach, and Stuart.

People don't know that there are doctors who are very experienced and well-versed in low vision care." Dr. Gannon is a panel member of the Florida Division of Blind Services, and the

founder and director of the Low Vision Institute and the American Foundation for Visual Rehabilitation.

Macular Degeneration is the most common eye disease amongst the senior population. As many as 25% of those over 65 have some degree of degeneration. The macula is a very small part of the retina, but is the center of the retina in the back of the eye. It is the most sensitive part of the retina and is responsible for giving us the ability to see sharply and clearly. When it degenerates, it leaves a blind spot right in the center of vision, making it impossible to recognize faces, read a book, or pass the driver's vision test.

The experts do not know what causes macular degeneration, but it is known that UV light from the sun is

a major contributing factor. Other factors are smoking, aging of course, poor nutrition, and genetics.

There are two types of macular degeneration, wet and dry. The wet type involves leaky blood vessels and can be lasered shut. There are other newer modalities of treatment as well. Unfortunately, most are only temporary since additional leaks usually occur.

"Our job is to figure out everything and anything possible to keep a person functioning," says Dr. Gannon.

Even if it's driving, or reading. Donald Papuette, 72, a former county assessor from Anaheim, California, said, "I could not read the street signs soon enough when driving and I couldn't read my saxophone music anymore."

The doctor fit him with bioptic telescope glasses. "Amazing," says Donald. "I can read the street sign twice as far as I did before. I can play my sax again. Happy Day!"

Dr. Gannon also provides special microscopic reading glasses to make the newspaper print much easier to read.

Dorothy Weston, 80, from Broward County, Florida was unable to perform her job as a bookkeeper before visiting Dr. Gannon. She received a pair of special tele-microscopic glasses for reading her spreadsheets and

viewing the computer. "I am thrilled to be able to keep working," said Dorothy.

"A while back I worked with a world class tournament bridge player who could no longer see the cards in her hand or the cards on the table," said Dr. Gannon. "I designed a special split tele-microscopic system for her to function like a bifocal. The top part allowed her to see the cards on the table and the bottom was for those in her hand."

Telescopic glasses usually cost over \$2,000," says Dr. Gannon, "especially if we build them with an automatic sunglass lens system."

Ellen Imboden traveled from Sweden and was helped with two pairs of glasses: special \$475 prismatic glasses that let her read newsprint, as well as bioptic telescopic glasses for her to continue driving in Sweden.

Low vision devices are not always expensive. Some reading glasses cost as little as \$475 and some magnifiers, \$100. Every case is different because people have different levels of vision and different desires.

Dr. Gannon can be reached at 1-866-942-2020. Or visit Dr. Gannon on the Internet at www.lowvisioninstitute.com. He is available to speak to interested support groups without any fees.

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Bill Finley

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This global treasure chest speeds up every kind of research for term papers, zapping legal documents around the equator, sending four-color pictures to relatives in Bangkok and filing your income taxes. However, it also de-personalizes communications by dropping out the emotional inflections of the human voice that registers so well over the telephone.

Another benefit of Internet communication is that younger folks must now know how to spell, an ability that got skipped for at least one generation. Baby Boomers seemed to have missed Spelling as a course in school just like they never had to suffer with learning the Palmer method of handwriting.

A greater contribution to society and our future good health is that scientists may now share reams of complex data and diagrams with their worldwide colleagues in a few seconds. Putting all that stuff in a box and mailing it via "snail-mail" or FedEx would take up valuable time and burn up rubber and gas. So the wonderful Internet saves trees, preserves oxygen and conserves energy.

It should be remembered that the Internet was perfected by scientists working for the U.S. Defense Department. So when the military looks bad, let's give them a little credit for this miracle of human communication!

Bill Finley is a Futurist, Urban Planner, Gerontologist and Author. Letters should be mailed to "2000 Plus," c/o Boomer Times & Senior Life, 1515 N. Federal Hwy., #300, Boca Raton, FL 33432 or email: srlife@gate.net.

