

## Special Focus on Elder Vision Loss

FriendshipWorks' enduring mission is to end elder isolation and replace it with the warmth and comfort of caring and dedicated friends. In this vein, we are committed to addressing the myriad conditions that can precipitate an elder becoming socially isolated. While most of us have some visual changes as we age, for some elders this loss is life-altering and can lead to social isolation and loneliness. This is why we have a special focus on addressing elder vision loss.

### Low Vision and Older Adults

- ⇒ “Today, 6.5 million Americans over age 65 have a severe visual impairment...Experts predict that by 2030, rates of severe vision loss will double along with the country's aging population.”\*
- ⇒ Elders living with low vision experience higher rates of falls, depression and social isolation. Helping elders with low vision receive the proper resources and examinations can greatly increase their quality of life.\*\*
- ⇒ More than half of the low vision elders that receive FriendshipWorks Friendly Visiting service reported concerns with their safety because of their low vision which included fears of: being alone, falling, bumping into things, crossing the street or working their gas stove.

### FriendshipWorks Volunteers Support Low Vision Elders

FriendshipWorks' volunteers provide physical, emotional and social support for low vision elders. Volunteers support low vision elders through many activities including:

- ◆ weekly social visits
- ◆ reading and sorting mail
- ◆ providing escorts to doctor's appointments, grocery stores or the social security office
- ◆ going for walks together
- ◆ setting up and learning new technologies
- ◆ making appointments for their matches

“My volunteer helped me feel more confident and less ashamed of my vision loss.”

\*American Foundation for the Blind, Aging and Vision Loss Fact Sheet

\*\*—Dr. Richard Jamara, Professor of Optometry and Low Vision Rehabilitation at the New England College of Optometry