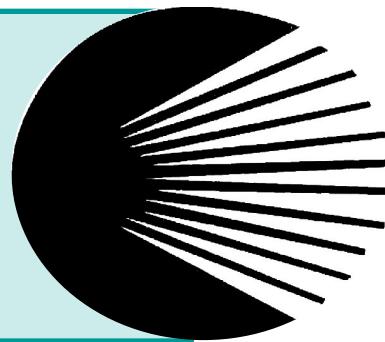


# Focus FORWARD

Vision Institute of Canada

Newsletter | December 2020



## A Very Special Thank You

The Coronavirus Pandemic that occurred in the spring of 2020 saw the closure of the Vision Institute's clinic from mid-March to reopening on June 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Faced with devastating financial hardship, the Board of Directors launched the **HELP** campaign and the **\$20 in 2020** campaign which together raised over \$65,500 from late July to the end of November. The campaigns are continuing, and we welcome all donations in any amount.



We are very grateful for the generous support of our individual donors. For the complete list of all donors, please [Click Here](#)

## Virtual Conference

Our first virtual conference was expertly emceed by President Dr. Mira Acs from VIC's office at York Mills. Unfortunately, stricter pandemic constraints prohibited Dr. Acs, Institute staff and some speakers from broadcasting from the Institute for Learning (IFL) in Scarborough but Bob Meffen and his technical team ran the event expertly from the IFL studio while Alysha Hunsberger, VIC's IT coordinator handled any technical issues at VIC's office.

***It was my first Vision Institute CE event and I found it very well put together and informative. Dr. A.J. S***

Vision Institute. The online platform allowed us to showcase these videos, and a video by the vision care charity **Optometrists Giving Sight** (OGS). OGS is a global fundraising initiative targeting the prevention of blindness and impaired vision. The Vision Institute is fortunate to have our charity work recognized by OGS who awarded us a \$25,000 grant for 2020.

For 2021, the Vision Institute will offer online education events. As with many other non-profit organizations we look forward – fingers crossed -- to return to hosting an in-person education conference in 2022. Our website will be updated regularly with education information.

VIC's continuing education offerings and silent auction are our main annual fundraising events and we sincerely thank the optometrists who attended Focus 2020 and those who participated in our silent auction.

## Impact of the Pandemic Lockdown

Once the severity of COVID-19 hit Canada, the Vision Institute's clinic, in compliance with Ontario government pandemic protocols, closed from mid-March to June 22<sup>nd</sup>. All clinic and administrative staff were placed on unemployment effective March 20<sup>th</sup>. Clinic reception was remotely monitored, and clinical personnel were available for emergencies only. During the almost four-month closure, the Executive Director applied weekly to the property management company; however, the company did not apply to the federal government for rent relief until October. The Institute applied and received the federal government loan which paid for basic expenditures (e.g. rent, internet, telephone) during this closure.



***Of all the conferences that I have attended and spoken at this year, this one was by far the one which ran the most smoothly and offered the best attendee experience. Dr. N.F.***

139 attended from across Canada and Guyana! They enjoyed Alysha Hunsberger's video interviews with Vision Institute optometrists, Dr. Lois Calder and Dr. Alan Ng who spoke about the work they do and why they choose "help" at the

The clinic re-opened in late June with stringent pandemic health and safety procedures. Strict hygiene protocols dictated widely spaced appointments so doctors and interns could clean thoroughly after every patient. Sky-rocketing costs for masks, face-shields and cleaning materials combined with the ability to see fewer patients, meant financial hardship for the Vision Institute.

To help address the financial shortfall, clinic and administrative staff generously agreed to a pay cut and VIC developed the  **HELP** and **\$20 in 2020** campaigns to raise greatly needed funds. These extraordinary initiatives combined with other cost-savings administrative measures plus the government continuing rent relief and CEWS programs, mean the Vision Institute can continue to provide exemplary care to those in need.

## Long-Term Care Homes

The first pandemic wave saw horrendous loss of life and laid bare the inadequacies of long-term care homes across Canada. During lockdown, community outreach optometrist, Dr. Lois Calder, made only emergency care visits when called. As the homes began to open up, they invited us back under tight infection control protocols to resume our much-appreciated eye care service.

**“It has been a great privilege to serve our esteemed senior patients during these challenging times,”** said Dr. Calder.

*Maintaining residents' optimum eye health and eye care has been very helpful in promoting and enhancing our residents' quality of life at Villa Leonardo Gamin. -V. Romero*

## Serving the Homeless Community

*We are thankful that you were able to pivot with us this year at our smaller pop-up shops across the city. Thank you for the comprehensive care you provide our guests! -M. Li*

Some of our work providing eye care to those who are unhoused was curtailed under pandemic conditions. Nevertheless, we were able to complete several clinic days with our partners such as Homeless Connect, Out of the Cold and Yonge Street Mission, offering many no-charge comprehensive eye examinations and eyewear.

## Quality Learning Experience

The Vision Institute welcomes 4<sup>th</sup> year interns from across North America. We give them the opportunity to work and learn from our clinical team both in clinic and off-site.

The majority of interns like to stay in touch and many return to visit or to attend our conference. We'd like to thank our 2020 interns for going above and beyond during these challenging times: **Jonathan Elin-Calcador, Catherine Lam , Maryam Nassiri, Brian Quach, Tharshinee Thevabalan**

## Partnership in Action



For many years the Vision Institute has partnered with the Yonge Street Mission: Evergreen to bring vision care to street youth. Through **YSM's Opportunities Fund**, we are able to welcome a college student and a university student for a ten week work experience contract. We are excited to have them join our team to assist with a much need digitization project. VIC does not have the personnel to do this mammoth task on our own and we are grateful to Aline Chan, Yonge Street Mission (she and her family are VIC patients) for connecting with Dr. Lois Calder for this opportunity.

The students work approximately 20 hours a week each for 10 weeks with a possibility to extend their contract to 20 weeks. Their salaries are covered by a government grant to Yonge Street Mission and there is a possibility of continuing this partnership throughout

## Stay Healthy || Stay Well

**Wishing you and “your bubble” a restful and healthy holiday season:**

Dr. Lois Calder, *Clinic Director*

Dr. Janice Hui

Dr. Leah Markin

Dr. Alan Ng

Dr. Jenna Walden

Dorina Reiz, *Optician*

Olayinka Jinadu, *Vision Therapist*

Frances MacCusworth, *Executive Director*

Alysha Hunsberger, *Operations Coordinator, Reception*

Esther Lung, *Accounting*

Sherry Power, *Reception*

## Board of Directors

Dr. Mira Acs, *President*

Ms. Barbara Wattie-Fuller, *Vice-President*

Dr. Camy Grewal

Dr. Kirsten North

Dr. Nadine Furtado

## Stay in Touch

The Vision Institute's board and staff welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions. Please email us at [visioninstitute@rogers.com](mailto:visioninstitute@rogers.com)