

Long Island Volunteer Hall of Fame
Archive Project
Inception to Induction
FOUNDATION FOR SIGHT AND SOUND
“When sight dims to darkness... When sound fades to silence”

Year of Founding: 2004

Issue(s) Addressed: Health and Special Needs

Induction Category & Year: Health and Special Needs, 2009

Founders: Mitch Shapiro

Personal Quote from Founder: “Your greatest weakness is your greatest strength.”

History: Before the Foundation for Sight and Sound was founded, Mitch Shapiro was actively involved with the Foundation Fighting Blindness for 8 1/2 years. Mitch took the knowledge he had gained from an organization called Foundation Fighting Blindness and developed it into the Foundation for Sight and Sound. Both hearing and seeing challenges affect Mitch Shapiro so he teamed up with his personal and professional colleagues to make a more immediate impact in the blind and deaf community.

Agency Mission: The Foundation for Sight and Sound’s mission is to enhance the quality of life for individuals who are affected by any visual and/or hearing challenges with no other alternatives. The Foundation for Sight and Sound has grown over the years because of the national Help America Hear Program that has been able to provide hearing aids to many people who would otherwise not have access to them due to cost. A pair of hearing aids cost on average \$4,000, if not more. The Foundation’s admirable work, dedication and constant compassion has made them reputable and dependable when people have nowhere else to turn. Mitch and his team are very aware that there are many people who do not have the resources to improve their own quality of life. Foundation for Sight and Sound has a goal to create an environment where people with visual and/or hearing challenges can live life to their full potential with all possible opportunities offered to them.

Population Served: People with any type of visual or hearing needs.

Scope of Activities: The Foundation for Sight and Sound has many events and activities. They do “Hearing Aid Missions” where they fit small groups of people all over the country with the correct hearing aids. They have an upcoming event in the Bronx and they will be fitting 20 people with hearing aids. Twenty people many sound like a small number, but the cost to provide 20 pairs of hearing aids comes to about \$80,000. Future growth for the program includes putting events together with the national Help America See program that can provide eyeglasses to those individuals who are visually disabled. They also do bike runs. Participants ride 42 miles and raise money by the mile. Mitch

Shapiro also does a fundraising event every year called “Going Over The Edge” where he rappels from a 6-story building to show people that they can overcome any fear by doing things they would have never done. All the money Mitch raises from this event is donated directly to the Foundation for Sight and Sound.

<http://www.foundationforsightandsound.org/events.html>

http://www.foundationforsightandsound.org/past_events.html

Volunteer Involvement: This foundation depends on the volunteer work and volunteers and supporters are constantly creating different fundraising events on behalf of the Foundation for Sight and Sound. There are over 150 volunteers nationwide. All of the volunteers are extremely dedicated and educated in the area. Volunteers are constantly networking and creating events to help raise money. The licensed Hearing Healthcare Specialists are also very involved in the Help America Hear Program. They dedicate their time and service by helping the Foundation for Sight and Sound fit their applicants with proper hearing aids.

Affiliate Organizations: The Foundation for Sight and Sound has been a resource to many assistance programs since 2004. Some of these programs include: *Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind, The League for the Hard of Hearing, Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic, Nassau County Museum of Art, State University of New York College of Optometry, Helen Keller National Center, Foundation Fighting Blindness and the Cleary School for the Deaf.* Foundation for Sight and Sound also collaborates with other organizations such as Sertoma (<http://www.sertoma.org>) and GN ReSound Corporation (<http://gnresound.com>). Sertoma helps to educate people about speech and hearing disabilities, and GN ReSound manufactures and provides numerous hearing aids. Other affiliate organizations include businesses that may do things for the charity. They have a sale on their website and donate a percentage of their profits to the Foundation for Sight and Sound. Listed below are the involved business affiliates:

- Expo Advantage - <http://www.expoadvantageusa.com/>
- ILA - <http://www.independentliving.com/>
- NST - <http://www.nst-li.com/>
- PlanMyTrip – <http://www.planmytrip.com>

Funding Sources: The Foundation for Sight and Sound previously received grants from the Stavros S. Niarchos Foundation. These grants helped provide the Foundation with the opportunity to develop and increase revenue without having to pull from their fundraising money.

Fundraising: Fundraising is a large priority of the Foundation for Sight and Sound. The Foundation raises money to support programs that allow visually and/or auditory challenged individuals to live up to their full potential. They also raise important funds for different programs that can help enhance the quality of life. The Foundation also uses fundraising to support educational outreach (inspirational programs for visually and auditorally affected individuals, their families, business groups and other community organizations), and to provide hope. As Mitch Shapiro would say, he and his colleagues

are constantly “raising money to give it away” to the people who truly need it. The volunteers work very hard to raise money and work just as hard to make sure the right people are obtaining it because everyone deserves the right to hear.

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April 13, 2011**

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