
***More Adults with Vision Loss Seeking Help Staying Connected During Pandemic
- Hadley Responding with Added Technology Workshops -***

WINNETKA, IL (January 18, 2021) — January is Glaucoma Awareness Month. An age-related eye disease, glaucoma impacts the lives of millions of aging Americans. Since the onset of COVID-19 those with glaucoma, macular degeneration and other visual impairments, have faced disproportionate vulnerabilities from living in extended isolation.

[Hadley](#), the nation's largest provider of free distance learning for adults with vision loss, has experienced a surge in enrollment for workshops, podcasts and discussion groups designed to keep the visually impaired connected to expert help during the pandemic, including new learning modules for those with vision loss on [how to use Zoom](#), as well as how to access special [low vision features](#) on their cell phones, smart devices, and computers.

Individuals with low vision or blindness have long-relied on their personal networks of family members, friends and others to navigate daily life. However, since COVID-19 many have since lost their support system, leaving them largely alone to try and keep informed and stay in touch with others, both of which are vital for maintaining mental and physical wellness. Newly released data has shown that clinical depression within the visually impaired community is being reported at nearly three times the level than the general population.

Linda O'Connell of Seguin, Texas is among the growing number of those with visual impairments who have turned to Hadley to help navigate life during the pandemic. Diagnosed with glaucoma, Linda, a former school administrator, realized that getting back on her computer after many years was important for her to stay informed, in touch and healthy. O'Connell began taking workshops through Hadley to learn how to get back online using screen readers and other new technologies.

While many businesses and public spaces have introduced new layouts or restrictions to try and limit the spread of the virus. These adjustments actually make places harder for visually impaired people to navigate – meaning they may go out less, including often foregoing needed medical services.

“It's impossible to be socially distant in public when you can't see six-feet in front of you,” stated O'Connell. “I learned more in one day on Hadley.edu than I have in the last year.” O'Connell continued, “It's gotten me through many rough times these last nine months, I've gotten back to emails and on the internet and have reconnected with those I lost touch with, the technology help has been life changing during the pandemic.”

Hadley recently overhauled its digital footprint, [Hadley.edu](#), which takes a dramatically different approach to reaching an audience that is becoming increasingly difficult to reach during the pandemic, primarily older adults facing vision loss. Built on many months of research and development work, the new platform is entirely based on the needs and wants of visually impaired adults to keep them connected, engaged and informed during the pandemic.

About Hadley

The mission of Hadley is to create personalized learning opportunities that empower adults with vision loss or blindness to thrive --- at home, at work and in their communities. A 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, Hadley relies on contributions from individuals, foundations, and corporations to fund its programs.