

HADLEY PROVIDES “IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE” IN NEW VIRTUAL REALITY SCREENING ROOM FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS AND STUDENTS

Recent technological advances have given those living with low vision much needed new tools to access visual information. Now a high-tech virtual reality experience is available for professionals serving those with vision loss, too. The idea is to give them a glimpse into how their patients see the world, increasing their understanding of what life may be like for them and what new skills they will need to live life safely and confidently.

At Hadley, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and the nation’s leader in distance and online learning for visually impaired adults, virtual reality has now become a valuable teaching tool for the many health care professionals, clinical students, optometrists, low vision therapists and ophthalmologists who visit Hadley to further their knowledge of the resources available through Hadley for their patients with visual impairments.

In 2019, prior to the pandemic, Hadley underwent a complete renovation of its building in north suburban Chicago - including an investment in technology - furthering Hadley’s commitment to learning for health care professionals by developing [a new virtual reality screening room](#) designed to immerse sighted individuals into a world of limited vision.

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Hadley’s virtual reality screening room surrounds visitors with floor-to-ceiling walls featuring various moving cityscapes and differing public scenes, using state-of-the-art projection technology from Epson. Once in the room, students are provided with special goggles that simulate different visual impairments such as macular degeneration, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy to better understand the way people with low vision see the world around themselves. To complete the immersive experience, a noise simulator in Hadley’s virtual reality room augments the environment with traffic, voices and other ambient sounds.



Hadley has long partnered with many national and international organizations to better meet the needs of health care professionals, including the [National Eye Institute](#) and the [Canadian National Institute for the Blind](#) (who originally produced the videos shown in Hadley’s virtual reality cave), as well as many individual universities, optometry and ophthalmology programs.

“Our virtual reality room is an extremely helpful tool for health care professionals and students,” said Julie Tye, CEO and President of Hadley, who has been preparing for the delayed debut of the virtual reality room since the onset on the pandemic.

“We are pleased to finally welcome back healthcare providers to Hadley after a long wait. The immersive experience we offer brings to life the reality of those living with vision loss. We hope that it illustrates to those serving our audience the very real need to assist their patients in accessing resources like Hadley to help them continue to thrive.”