

Print this Page

[←-back to story](#)

## North Central Sight Services focuses on vision

Special to the Sun-Gazette

POSTED: May 17, 2009

When Joyce Gnoffo of Williamsport was just 20 years old, she was diagnosed with glaucoma.

The devastating disease progressed over the years and now at age 57, Joyce continues to work hard every day to overcome the obstacles the disease has created in her life.

She credits North Central Sight Services with helping her overcome many of those obstacles. Joyce has worked full-time as an industry associate at NCSS for 25 years now and participates in the social service programs. Because of the organization's support, she is able to maintain her own apartment independently.

"Because I am not able to drive, the Social Services Program at North Central Sight Services provides transportation and assistance to and from the grocery store, pharmacy, doctors' appointments, and other essential errands. A life skills assistant helps me with reading prices and finding items at the grocery store, refilling prescriptions, and scheduling appointments," Joyce explained.

"Our agency philosophy focuses on helping people help themselves and emphasizes the abilities and capabilities of the blind and visually impaired people we serve. To accomplish this mission, we offer a variety of rehabilitation services, an Industry Program that provides various types of employment opportunities for the blind and visually impaired, and a Prevention of Blindness Program that includes eye screenings, public education, referral services and the provision of low vision aids," explained Bob Garrett, president and CEO of NCSS.

NCSS manufactures and assembles products for the government through a nationwide industry program called AbilityOne. As an industry associate, Joyce performs many duties that are assigned to her, including running the shrink wrap machine, operating the shredding machine, and packing various items. Joyce was awarded employee of the year in 1997 for being an exceptional employee.

"With funding from Lycoming County United Way for prevention of blindness and social services, we are able to promote public awareness about potential blinding eye disease and offer screenings," Garrett added. "The social services program provides a comprehensive line up of activities and courses designed to help individuals who are blind or experiencing vision loss. Our goal is to keep people living as independently as possible."

In addition to her employment, Joyce participates in the "VISION" support group. The group meets once a month and provides social and emotional support for members.

"VISION has educational meetings to help us with our independence," said Joyce. "We practice tasks such as money identification and signature writing. We do fun things too - like going to Crosscutters baseball games, going out to eat, and having a Christmas party. And speaking of fun things, I am also learning how to cook and bake now with my vision rehabilitation specialist."

"My loss of vision has been a struggle in so many ways," Joyce said. "But in many ways, I am very grateful that it brought me to North Central Sight Services. Thanks to them, I have made many wonderful friends over the years, have a job that has increased my self-worth, and have learned lots of ways to maintain my independence."

Through its annual funds distribution process determined by community volunteers, United Way allocated \$21,000 for the Prevention of Blindness Program and the Social Services Program at NCSS for the last year.

"We are pleased to be able to fund these programs at North Central Sight Services because they make a real, positive difference in the lives of their clients, their families, and the local workforce right here in Lycoming County," said Joanne Ludwikowski, president of LCUW board of directors. "Preventing just one case of blindness or helping an individual to overcome obstacles from a disease such as glaucoma is using United Way money raised for its intended purpose."

For more information on NCSS, call 323-9401 or visit [ncsight.org](http://ncsight.org). For more information on Lycoming County United Way or to support the campaign that funds programs such as this one, visit [lcuw.org](http://lcuw.org) or call 323-9448.

### Article Photos



PHOTO PROVIDED

Joyce Gnoffo of Williamsport, diagnosed with glaucoma when she was 20, continues to work hard every day to overcome the obstacles the disease has created in her life. She credits North Central Sight Services with helping her overcome many of those obstacles.

[Subscribe to Williamsport Sun-Gazette](#)