

An Out of Sight Night

The River Hills Lions Club's September dinner meeting was decidedly different from the norm. The theme was "An Out of Sight Night," so named because the evening featured a panel of speakers affected by various levels of sight loss, and because the diners had an option of



enjoying their main course while wearing total blackout blindfolds. The experience served to reinforce the Lions historic commitment to serving the visually challenged with monetary contributions and health screenings. During dinner, one Lion was overheard saying, "this was one of the most memorable meals I've ever had", and another said, "the food tastes even better without being able to see it; my sense of smell is definitely enhanced".

The panel included one of our own Lions, Hal Nolan, who has been progressively losing his vision for the last 20 years, and has dedicated his life to volunteerism. Lion Hal volunteers regularly for a local Assistance Center whose mission is to assist people in need through providing food, financial assistance, health services, and education.

Other panelists included three successful, business professionals: a Systems Analyst who progressively lost his vision over time until he lost it completely at age of 19, another who suffers from Stargardt's disease and has severely low vision, and a mother who raised two children with Retinitis Pigmentosa.

The panelists shared how they relate to losing their vision on a personal and professional level, addressing barriers they encounter, their achievements, and providing tips for communicating with people who have low or no vision. Since the panelists encouraged open and candid discussion, Lion members were able to ask anything they wanted to know about the daily lives of our panelists. It was fascinating to hear how the panelist who is blind, raises two young children along with his wife who is also blind. When asked, "how do you change diapers

without being able to see”, the panelist laughed saying “changing diapers is a messy affair whether you can see or not; instincts and your nose guide you in the right direction”!

Our club also learned of a variety of technological aids the panelists use to work and navigate daily. Smart phones and the myriad of applications available have certainly made their lives easier. They also shared a number of tools they use that allow them to use computers with ease.

Acknowledged by many Lions who attended this event, “this was a mind opening experience”.