



NORTHERN PLAINS EYE
FOUNDATION
Summer 2011

The Eye Opener

*Enhancing
eye health
through
education,
research and
community service
for people of the
Northern Plains.*

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“IT IS AMAZING WHAT YOU CAN ACCOMPLISH IF YOU DO NOT CARE WHO GETS THE CREDIT.” – HARRY S. TRUMAN

Last fall, the Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) Board of Directors hosted a strategic planning retreat. To assist in the development of a three year strategic plan, NPEF contracted with project consultant Sharon Chontos to facilitate the strategic planning process. As a part of the data collection, Chontos conducted almost 30 confidential interviews with past and present NPEF Board members, staff, donors and other Foundation partners. Interview questions were designed to assess Foundation strengths, challenges, unmet needs and priorities.



*NPEF Board Members
Vote On Strategic Priorities*

The post-interview summary provided insightful feedback. First, it revealed significant strengths. NPEF's Board and staff members believe in the Foundation's mission. Area eye care professionals are engaged on the Board and within the programs – many donating not only their time, talent and expertise, but monetarily – to support the Foundation. In addition to eye care professionals, the balance of NPEF's Board contains professional career background diversity, which lends strength to the membership. Those from the general public, who know the Foundation, have a good perception of the Foundation regarding its eye-related mission.

While these are notable strengths, challenges and unmet needs were also identified. There is a lack of awareness regarding the Foundation's mission and its flagship programs. A stronger identity in the community is needed. Relationships with like-minded organizations and local businesses need to be nurtured and expanded. Donor development efforts must be strengthened to ensure the long-term sustainability of our Foundation. Long-range strategic planning needs to be reframed to reflect today's Foundation and current community needs.

Through many hours of discussion, priorities emerged and an exciting new plan evolved. Opportunities for innovative collaborative projects were inspired and crafted to strengthen

NPEF's development efforts and create renewed awareness of our Foundation. As you read the pages of this newsletter, we welcome the chance to share some of these projects with you. Learn about our Workplace Vision Wellness program, a new professional presentation for construction and trades industry businesses, focused on the areas of eye care, wellness and eye safety in the workplace. Read about the opportunity to expand our outreach through our proposed Children's Vision Initiative, based on a successful model created by the Wyoming Lions Early Childhood Vision Project, which will make vision screenings accessible to more children throughout the Black Hills region.

This process has invigorated our Foundation and given us renewed enthusiasm, symbolic of the headline quote by President Harry S. Truman, "It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not



*NPEF Board Brainstorm
Goals and Objectives*

care who gets the credit." While we find our Board and committee volunteers, donors, and partnering organizations generally care not about receiving credit for their significant contributions, there is truly much credit due. Thanks to all of you, we have accomplished a great deal, and with your continued support, our Foundation aspires to reach new heights, moving even closer to realizing our mission – to enhance eye health for the people of the Northern Plains through education, research and community service.

What's Inside...

<i>Director's View & New Board Members.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Workplace Vision, HVW & Visionary Partners.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Dr. Paul Zimmerman Scholarship & SDAO Grant... </i>	<i>4</i>
<i>2011-2012 Health-Care Education Scholars.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Children's Vision Screening Initiative Launches....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Christmas Gift of Sight.....</i>	<i>7</i>

EYE TO EYE: THE DIRECTOR'S VIEW



The article on page four of this edition of *The Eye Opener* is a story about Northern Plains Eye Foundation's (NPEF) creation of the Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman Memorial Health-Care Education Scholarship, a tribute to a wonderful friend, colleague and NPEF Board Member. Dr. Z, as he was more commonly known, was one of those people who just made you feel good. He treated anyone he met as if he had known them for years. There was always a smile on his face, a twinkle in his eye, and a hug. Most importantly, there was a kindness and genuine nature wherein doing the "right thing" came naturally. There was compassion for his patients, and enthusiasm for teaching. He truly lived what he taught and taught what he lived. And, in the end, there was incredible courage and unrelenting optimism.

As a member of NPEF's Board of Directors, Dr. Z played an integral role in developing the Children's Vision Screening Initiative, featured in the article on page six of this publication. While NPEF was making inroads with its Healthy Vision Week, an annual vision screening program begun in 2008 to provide free vision screenings to children ages 3 – 11, it was apparent there was a need for on-going and more broad-based vision screenings in young children. In typical Dr. Z style, he challenged us to do better, to do more toward meeting this need, and he committed to making it happen. One of his last meetings on behalf of our Foundation was with local elementary school teachers, school nurses and community coordinators to explore how to make vision screenings accessible to more children throughout the region.

The NPEF Health-Care Education Scholarship, named in his honor, is another testament to Dr. Z, the consummate teacher, who inspired each of us to not only learn from him, but to strive to be more like him.

Thank you, Kris, for so graciously and unselfishly sharing your husband, Dr. Z, with all of us. He was a great human being and his greatness deserved more time. Know his energy and kind, caring, joyous spirit is forever present in us and in what we do.

Ronda Musimsky

Executive Director

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBERS

Northern Plains Eye Foundation recently welcomed two new members to its Board of Directors, who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience in the eye care industry.



Marsha Humphreys

Marsha Humphreys is the manager/optician for Your Eyes Only Optical at Slingsby & Wright Eye Care Center in Rapid City. She grew up in Windom, MN, and is a graduate of Nettleton Business College (now NAU) in Sioux Falls, SD.

Marsha worked as a bookkeeper in an optical shop in Sioux Falls following college, and was lured into the industry by all the beautiful eye glass frames and her fascination with lens technology. She ultimately chose to become an optician, training at the Walman Optical Lab. She moved to Rapid City in 1982 to begin her career in optometry. She is married to Mark Humphreys, who is the Executive Director for the South Dakota Board of Technical Professions, and they have three children, Andrew, Leah and Brian. Marsha has served on the boards of the South Dakota Hearing Aid Association, Rapid City Arts Council, Rapid City Downtown Association, Rapid City Women's Network and South Dakota Opticians Association.



Dr. Terry Spencer

Dr. Terry Spencer recently settled in Rapid City after spending much of his education and career in the Intermountain West region. He was recruited to join the Black Hills Regional Eye Institute after practicing ophthalmology in Denver for 5 years. He specializes in cataract and refractive surgery.

Prior to college, Terry enlisted in the United States Navy, where he trained to be a nuclear reactor operator. He was stationed on The USS Nimitz aircraft carrier during the first Persian Gulf Crisis. He and his wife, Heather, saved enough money to go to college after he completed his six-year stint in the Navy. They worked their way through undergraduate education at Idaho State University, and then moved to Salt Lake City, Utah, for medical school. Terry completed medical school, residency, and a specialty fellowship at the University of Utah. The Spencers love the outdoor activities of the Black Hills, but spend most of their free time involved with their children's sports and school.

We are grateful to have both Marsha and Terry join our talented Board team. A warm welcome!

WORKPLACE VISION WELLNESS NOW SHOWING

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 2,000 workplace eye injuries occur each day, and these eye injuries cost an estimated \$1 billion each year. Nearly 100,000 of these injuries will be disabling, resulting in temporary or permanent vision loss. If you think these are “national statistics,” with no real relevance in our small rural communities, ask Jon Gunderman, Safety Coordinator for Black Hills Power (BHP).

“We have experienced eye injuries within our company,” Gunderman stated. “And, unfortunately many of these eye injuries are due to not wearing proper eye protection.” Gunderman and other area safety managers recently collaborated with NPEF team members to address this issue.

Thanks to NPEF Board Members, Mutch Usera, Dr. Dallas Wilkinson and Dr. Terry Spencer, NPEF is ready to introduce its new **Workplace Vision Wellness** presentation on workplace eye safety. The presentation is a collaborative effort developed from conversations with area construction and trades industry safety representatives, including Heavy Constructors/Gustafson

Builders, BHP, Knology and MDU. “Most people would give up any other sense, rather than lose their vision,” stated Dr. Wilkinson, of Advanced Eye Care in Hot Springs. “Workplace eye injuries can be prevented in most all cases by simply wearing the proper safety glasses, goggles and/or face shields.”

The half-hour **Workplace Vision Wellness** presentation, made by Drs. Spencer and Wilkinson and other eye care professional volunteers on behalf of NPEF, covers topics such as workplace eye hazards, types of eye protection, use and care of eye protection and what to do in the case of an eye injury. “I see these eye injuries in my practice. At least ten to twenty percent result in permanent vision loss,” commented Dr. Spencer, Ophthalmologist at Black Hills Regional Eye Institute. “If we can prevent even one person from losing their vision, this presentation will have been effective.”

For more information regarding the **Workplace Vision Wellness** presentation, or to schedule a presentation for your business, please contact NPEF Executive Director, Ronda Gusinsky, at (605) 716-6733.



Eye protection must be worn



HELP KIDS SEE CLEARLY

Healthy Vision Week

2011

During Healthy Vision Week, eye care professionals from throughout the Black Hills and Pierre team up with Northern Plains Eye Foundation to provide free vision screenings to children – ages 3 to 11 – who have not yet had their eyes examined.

.....

This year's Healthy Vision Week will be celebrated

October 3rd – 7th!

.....

Watch for more information coming to an elementary school near you, or visit www.npef.org, early this fall!

THANKS TO OUR 2011 VISIONARY PARTNERS

NPEF recognizes and thanks our 2011 **Visionary Partners**.

Through **Visionary Partner** sponsorship of NPEF's flagship programs, **Health-Care Education Scholarship, Healthy Vision Week and Christmas Gift of Sight**, these partners join us in making our communities a better place to live by assuring future generations have access to quality health care, eye-related problems in our children continue to be detected through free annual screenings, and each year, we share the gift of sight with those less fortunate in our community.



DR. PAUL ZIMMERMAN MEMORIAL HEALTH-CARE SCHOLARSHIP



DR. PAUL ZIMMERMAN
1948 - 2011

~
*“Our time on
earth is decided
by God,
and how we live
that journey
is decided by
each of us.”*
~

Dr. Paul Zimmerman lived a brief, but inspiring journey that touched the lives of every person he met. His career in Ophthalmology took him from Oregon, to Utah, to California and lastly, thankfully, Rapid City, SD, where he accepted a partnership in Ophthalmology with Black Hills Regional Eye Institute in 2002. In 2008, Dr. Zimmerman joined the Northern Plains Eye Foundation as a member of its Board of Directors.

In the fall of 2009, Dr. Zimmerman was diagnosed with malignant melanoma of his right eye. It was a devastating diagnosis and one of life’s cruelest ironies. The area from which Dr. Zimmerman’s cancer originated was his own sub-specialty, the area in which he treated patients his entire life. He fought the disease ferociously, but in the end, on January 10, 2011, we lost, as described by one of his patients, “an awesome, incredible, superb gift to humanity.”

Throughout his life, Dr. Paul Zimmerman taught us invaluable, life-long lessons on how to live our journey. He never stopped learning. His unending curiosity, combined with his genuine love of people, made him the consummate teacher, inspiring each of us to not only learn from him, but to strive to be more like him.

Northern Plains Eye Foundation is honored to pay tribute to Dr. Zimmerman with the **Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman Memorial Health-Care Education Scholarship**. Since 2005, Northern Plains Eye Foundation has awarded Health-Care Education Scholarships to ensure future generations have access to quality health care in our region, creating a solid foundation from which Northern Plains Eye Foundation can fulfill its mission to enhance eye health for the people of the Northern Plains. Beginning in 2011, the **Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman Memorial Health-Care Education Scholarship** will be awarded annually to a scholar whose emphasis is in the eye care field, and who most embodies Dr. Zimmerman’s legacy of leadership, service and kindness.

With endearing memories of Dr. Zimmerman guiding us, Northern Plains Eye Foundation is pleased to announce the first recipient of this distinguished award, Steven Turpin, a 2010 graduate of Campbell County High School, Gillette, Wyoming. Steven recently completed his freshman year of college at Indiana University at Bloomington, pursuing a career in the field of optometry. One of Steven’s favorite freshman classes involved thinking about ways in which patients can bring back patient-centered health care on a large scale and begin to co-produce their own health. Steven volunteers several hours a week at a Bloomington day shelter for the homeless. In working at the shelter, Steven noticed a significant number of the clients who came to the shelter suffered from Type II Diabetes. Their diets were overloaded with carbs, and they were unaware of the harm this was doing to their bodies. Steven created a brochure of easily understood information to educate clients on small steps they could take to better manage their conditions. In addition to his volunteer work, Steven is a member of Indiana University track and field team, competing as a multi athlete in both the decathlon and heptathlon.

On behalf of the family of Dr. Paul Zimmerman, and Northern Plains Eye Foundation Board of Directors and staff, please help us congratulate Steven Turpin, the 2011-2012 **Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman Memorial Health-Care Education Scholarship** recipient. Steven has received the Foundation’s top scholarship award in the amount of \$1,500.

SDAO GRANTS \$2,500 FOR FREIS RESEARCH

Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) would like to thank and recognize the Board of Directors, membership and staff of the South Dakota Academy of Ophthalmology for its \$2,500 grant in support of NPEF’s Fireworks-Related Eye Injury Study (FREIS). NPEF launched FREIS in the summer of 2009 to capture and document eye-related injuries caused by fireworks around Independence Day.

For the past two years, the FREIS has been conducted in partnership with Ophthalmologists across the state of South Dakota, collecting data only on serious eye injuries referred to Ophthalmologists. In order to make our study more comprehensive, FREIS was expanded this year, inviting the participation of Optometrists and hospital emergency rooms throughout South Dakota, in order to include patients seen by Optometrists or admitted to emergency rooms, treated and released without referral to an Ophthalmologist. A summary of this year’s FREIS will be available this fall.

NPEF PLEDGES \$12,500 FOR HEALTH-CARE SCHOLARSHIPS



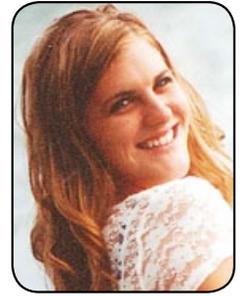
Kaylee A. Bahr
Hometown:
Aberdeen, SD

Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) has selected twelve recipients for its 2011-2012 scholarships. Nine **Health-Care Education Scholarships** were awarded to high school seniors pursuing full-time health-care related studies at a college, university or technical institution, as well as three **Continuing Health-Care Education Scholarships** to students returning to post-secondary health-care related studies.

Scholarship recipients were selected from a distinguished group of 88 outstanding applicants, with impressive academic credentials, scholastic standing, extracurricular activities, personal statements, and letters of recommendation. We congratulate each of our winners and wish them continued success as they further their academic growth in the coming years.

NPEF's Health-Care Education Scholarship Committee extends special congratulations to Steven Turpin, the first recipient of the Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman Memorial Health-Care Education Scholarship. This distinguished award is presented in honor of Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman, a member of NPEF Board of Directors and Ophthalmologist with Black Hills Regional Eye Institute, who lost a brave fight with malignant melanoma of his right eye earlier this year.

This is the seventh year NPEF has awarded scholarships for ongoing college study to high school seniors and former scholarship recipients from within our 5-state service area (northeast Wyoming, northwest Nebraska, southeast Montana, southwest North Dakota, and all of South Dakota). Since the **Health-Care Education Scholarship** program's inaugural year, NPEF has awarded sixty-four Health-Care Education Scholarships totaling \$60,500 to students pursuing full-time undergraduate health-care studies, reflecting NPEF's strong commitment to the education of future eye care and health-care professionals. If you are interested in contributing to this scholarship fund, please contact the Foundation office at (605) 716-6733.



Julia D. Scherbenske
Hometown:
Steele, ND



Natalie F. Reynen
Hometown:
Milbank, SD
 Sponsored by
 Rapid City Downtown &
 Rushmore Lions Clubs



Rebecca A. Runge
Hometown:
Wessington, SD
 Sponsored by
 Black Hills Power



Brianna L. Caton
Hometown:
Billings, MT



Jeffrey S. Ebnan
Hometown:
Sioux Falls, SD



Julianna S. Diddle
Hometown:
Brookings, SD



Gabriel J. Orion
Hometown:
Brookings, SD



Bethany A. Lueck
Hometown:
Arcadia, NE

2011-2012 CONTINUING SCHOLAR SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Nicolas R. Stakel
Hometown:
Burke, SD



Steven A. Turpin
Hometown:
Gillette, WY
*Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman Memorial
 Health-Care Education Scholarship Recipient
 Sponsored by
 Black Hills Regional Eye Institute*



Ashley P. Schmidt
Hometown:
Mitchell, SD
*Sponsored by
 Jeffrey L. Rausch, Denette K. Eisnach,
 and Jill M. Hart, Doctors of Optometry*



CHILDREN'S VISION SCREENING INITIATIVE LAUNCHES

Simply stated, the mission of Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) is to enhance eye health, with children's vision as one of our top priorities. Based on data collected over the past three years by NPEF during its annual Healthy Vision Week children's vision screening program, which provides free vision screenings to children ages 3 to 11 years, 40 percent of children screened had a vision problem. Of those, 11.5 percent required glasses. Additional feedback from Healthy Vision Week partners indicates an on-going and more broad-based need for vision screenings in young children, specifically the socioeconomically underserved student population. Also noted was a need for greater emphasis on follow-up compliance – i.e., “closing the loop” between identifying concerns and appropriate intervention, such as a full eye exam in the cases of children who fail the screening.

While only an eye care professional can diagnose and treat a vision problem, vision screenings identify children who need a full eye exam. Long-term, the failure to treat vision disorders in children affects such issues as childhood development, learning performance, self-esteem, social-emotional behavior, academic achievement, high school drop-out rates, and juvenile delinquency. From a societal standpoint, the failure to detect and treat children's vision disorders affects the rates of adult criminality, literacy, and labor productivity.



Wyoming Project Coordinator, Rebecca Allen, describes PediaVision Assessment Solution System.

On May 12th, NPEF hosted a presentation by Rebecca Allen, Project Coordinator for Wyoming Lions Early Childhood Vision Project. The Wyoming Lions Early Childhood Vision Project began as a research project in 1999 through the University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND). To date the project has screened approximately 54,000 children.

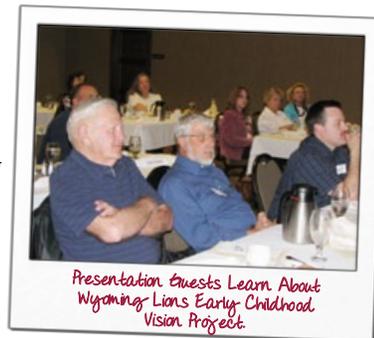
Over 5,000 of those children have been referred on to an eye care professional. Of the children who completed an exam by an eye care professional, approximately 2,300 received a diagnosis of vision impairment and are undergoing various treatments/corrections.

Allen shared information on the history and development of the Wyoming Lions Early Childhood Vision Project, the evolution of the vision screening process and related follow-up services, and demonstrated the PediaVision Assessment Solution System, a video photo screening device currently used by the project. PediaVision targets refractive error, which consists of three categories: myopia (nearsightedness), hyperopia (farsightedness), and astigmatism (blurry vision at any distance). By utilizing this non-invasive approach, comprehensive, accurate screening results indicating why a child should be “referred” to an eye care specialist, are obtained. The results are then documented on a printed report to educate parents/physicians of the child's need.

Over thirty individuals gathered at the May presentation, representing a diverse group of professionals from the eye care

industry, health-care organizations, area schools, service clubs and local businesses. All agreed the Wyoming Lions Early Childhood Vision Project is an incredible project and one which provided opportunity to gather invaluable information in order to move NPEF's children's vision screening program forward.

Since that time, NPEF, along with an ever-growing group of collaborative partners, is exploring the creation of a **Children's Vision Screening Initiative**, based on Wyoming's well-established and very successful vision screening model. In the case statement, NPEF and its collaborative partners assert the project outreach of the **Children's Vision Screening Initiative** will provide early detection of vision problems in children ages six months to 11 years through a partner-supported strategy, utilizing uniform screening and referral processes that will lead to timely diagnosis and appropriate intervention.

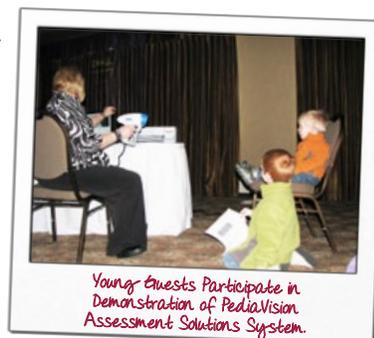


Presentation guests learn about Wyoming Lions Early Childhood Vision Project.

Development and successful launch of the **Children's Vision Screening Initiative** is an extensive undertaking – from both a staff and budgetary perspective. It cannot be accomplished without the vision and support of the NPEF Board of Directors – many of whom are members of the eye care community, including three ophthalmologists, two optometrists and four other healthcare professionals. On June 28th, NPEF Board of Directors unanimously approved moving forward with the **Children's Vision Screening Initiative**.

Our goal is to launch the **Children's Vision Screening Initiative** before the close of 2011, with controlled expansion, in stages, throughout the Black Hills over the next two years. In the first year of the initiative, our goal is to screen a minimum of 1,000 children. Long-term, the goal is to expand the initiative state-wide within three to five years.

We invite you to join NPEF and its collaborative partners in our commitment to make the **Children's Vision Screening Initiative** a reality. Please consider supporting the **Children's Vision Screening Initiative** with your donation. Your investment will allow NPEF and its collaborative partners to ensure vision problems in our children are prevented through early detection and treatment intervention. To learn more about the **Children's Vision Screening Initiative**, please contact NPEF Executive Director, Ronda Gusinsky, at (605) 716-6733.



Young guests participate in demonstration of PediaVision Assessment Solution System.

FOUNDATION GIVES GIFT OF SIGHT

This year, Christmas came in January for Lori Goakey and Lora Lee Gault. Goakey and Gault are two of the three recipients of the recent Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) **Christmas Gift of Sight**, a charitable program that awards sight-saving surgery to less fortunate individuals.



Their stories are those of individuals who are much like us – until they began to encounter vision problems. They are employed, but due to financial considerations and no access to health insurance, are not able to afford the necessary care. As the struggle with their vision ensued, normal day-to-day activities such as driving, reading or watching television became

difficult. Their vision problems escalated to the point where they were struggling to continue their employment, or in some cases, were no longer able to be employed. What income there was, went only so far as to pay bills and very basic living expenses. And, in the most severe cases, family members or friends needed to be relied upon to provide assistance with the most basic levels of care such as transportation, shopping for groceries, reading mail, cooking meals, writing checks to pay bills, etc.

These heart-wrenching stories are all too common. But for Goakey and Gault, there is a happy ending made possible by **Christmas Gift of Sight** and a very benevolent eye care community. Goakey, thanks to the **Christmas Gift of Sight** application submitted by her optometrist, Dr. Pauline Weichler, received sight-saving surgeries performed by Dr. Monte Dirks and Dr. Terry Spencer of Black Hills Regional Eye Institute. Thanks to Dr. Spencer, who both submitted the

Christmas Gift of Sight application and performed her surgery, Gault, too, received care.

“Lora’s situation was an extreme example,” Dr. Terry Spencer stated. Gault was not able to work because of severe cataracts. She could not read the largest letter on the eye chart. “Her sister had to guide her into the clinic by the arm,” Spencer stated. “Because of cataract surgery, she can see, function and lead a productive life again. I am so thankful that through the Gift of Sight Program, we were able to help her see.”

Through the kindness of area eye care professionals, like Dirks and Spencer, and others, who perform the procedures at reduced fees for the Northern Plains Eye Foundation, a total of six **Christmas Gift of Sight** award recipients have regained their vision. More importantly, they regained their independence, mobility and improved quality of life. “We are inspired by these individuals’ courage in dealing with their disease and are pleased to be able to help them regain their vision,” commented Dr. Monte Dirks.

NPEF thanks the Foundation Board, donors and business partners, as well as a very generous eye care community, for making the **Christmas Gift of Sight** possible for people like Goakey and Gault. NPEF’s third 2010 **Christmas Gift of Sight** recipient, Cathy Mayes, who had her first surgery performed last winter by Dr. Prema Abraham of Black Hills Regional Eye Institute, is awaiting a follow-up procedure this fall.



CHRISTMAS GIFT OF SIGHT

NPEF Extends Our Gratitude To

Doctors Prema Abraham, Monte Dirks and Terry Spencer of Black Hills Regional Eye Institute, and Dr. Pauline Weichler, Eye Works, for their care of Christmas Gift of Sight Recipients, Cathy Mayes, Lora Lee Gault and Lori Goakey, as well as area Ophthalmologists and Optometrists, who referred patients for consideration for 2010 Christmas Gift of Sight.

We Also Thank 2010 Christmas Gift of Sight Program Partners



We Serve

Rapid City Downtown and Rushmore Lions Club



EDUCATION



RESEARCH



SERVICE



NORTHERN PLAINS EYE
FOUNDATION

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Rapid City, SD 57701

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NORTHERN PLAINS EYE
FOUNDATION

COMING ATTRACTIONS

FREIS

June 15 – July 31 – State of South Dakota

South Dakota School Nurse Conference

July 19 & 20 – Aberdeen

Workplace Vision Wellness Presentation

July 22 – Black Hills Power (BHP) – Rapid City

Healthy Vision Week

October 3 - 7 – Black Hills & Pierre

