

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

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JOHN T. VUCUREVICH FOUNDATION GRANT AWARDED TO NORTHERN PLAINS EYE FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN'S VISION SCREENING

Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) has received a \$30,000 grant from the **John T. Vucurevich Foundation for the Northern Plains Eye Foundation Western South Dakota Lions Children's Vision Screening Initiative (CVSI)**, a collaborative partnership with local Lions Clubs, Community Health Center of the Black Hills, Inc., and area school nurses.

CVSI has been established for the purpose of making vision screenings accessible to more children throughout the region, to ensure early detection of vision problems by utilizing uniform screening and referral processes that will lead to timely diagnosis and appropriate intervention.

The initiative is a partner supported strategy that benefits from a unique collaboration of resources. Local Lions Clubs, in partnership with NPEF, are committed to raising the necessary funds to launch and sustain the initiative. In addition, Lions volunteers, supported by NPEF staff, will be trained to administer the free children's vision screenings in their respective communities. Community Health Center of the Black Hills, General Beadle Community School and Clinic, and area school nurses have provided insights, backing and vision to develop the initiative and continue to be involved in facilitating CVSI in our community. Letters of support have been received from Dr. Gail Bernard, the Rapid City Rushmore and Downtown Lions Clubs, Piedmont Valley Lions Club, the Rapid City Area School District, General Beadle Community School, Community Health Center of the Black Hills, and the South Dakota Optometric Society.

"The John T. Vucurevich Foundation invests in health and human services programming, with emphasis on advancing the safety and well being of our children," stated Sandy Diegel, Executive

Director, John T. Vucurevich Foundation. "We look for collaborative partnerships that create long-term change and facilitate solutions that impact our community. CVSI is a good fit," she continued.

According to Ronda Gusinsky, NPEF Executive Director, South Dakota is one of only 10 states that do not require children to receive any preventive vision care before starting school. Based on data collected over the past three years by NPEF during its annual Healthy Vision Week children's vision screening program, 40 percent of children screened had a vision problem. Of those, 11.5 percent required glasses. The failure to treat vision disorders in children affects, among other things, such issues as childhood development, self-esteem, academic achievement, drop-out rates, and juvenile delinquency. "For very obvious reasons, we see the launch of CVSI as top priority," Gusinsky said. "The grant from the John T. Vucurevich Foundation will allow us to order the specialized screening equipment and 'officially' launch CVSI. We are grateful and honored to have their support."

For more information on CVSI, see page 4.

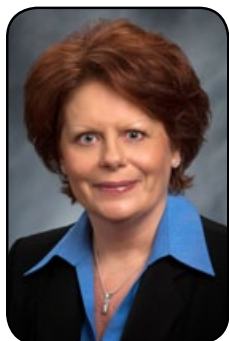


*From left, NPEF's Gusinsky and Zeller,
John T. Vucurevich Foundation's Diegel,
and NPEF's Rydstrom*

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EYE TO EYE: THE DIRECTOR'S VIEW



As I am writing this, Christmas is just a few short days away and the New Year is fast approaching. Like many of you, the holidays cause me to reflect on the past year and the many things for which I am grateful, as well as to be filled with hope and excitement for the coming year.

This newsletter tells the stories of many of the wonderful people that bring Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) "to life," the ways their involvement allows us to serve, and the countless lives we touch in doing so. Whether it is one of our Christmas Gift of Sight recipients, who, through sight-saving surgery, has regained their vision along with independence and enhanced quality of life, or a Health-Care Education Scholar, whose path to medical school is made feasible through a Foundation scholarship award, your support makes it possible for NPEF to bestow these countless gifts. It may seem obvious, but we can't say it enough, we are so grateful for you.

On behalf of our Foundation's Board of Directors and our staff team, I wish you a Merry Christmas and joyous New Year. I look forward to continuing the work of our Foundation, to preserve the sense of sight, on your behalf in the year to come.

Ronda Gusinsky
Executive Director

WELCOME TO NPEF'S NEWEST BOARD MEMBERS

Northern Plains Eye Foundation is pleased to welcome two new members to its Board of Directors.



Julaine Arient-Rollman

Julaine Arient-Rollman is a Certified Sr. Rehabilitation Counselor for the State of South Dakota, Department of Human Services, for the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. Her husband, Kenneth, is a Brailist. They have one son, William, and one granddaughter, Tessa.

Julaine, who was born and raised in Illinois, completed her BA in English and History, Summa Cum Laude, from Black Hills State University, and earned her Master's Degree from the University of Florida in Rehabilitation Counseling and Mental Health Counseling. (Yes, she's a Gator!) She is a martial arts instructor, certified through the US Olympic Training Centers for Tae Kwon Do, and has numerous champion athletes to her credit.

Julaine is an Alpha Eta Society member, served on the Boards of SD Rehabilitation Association and Western Resources for dis-ABLED Independence, and the Mayor's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities, Division of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. She is currently the President of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) in Rapid City, Vice President of NFB of SD and is a Cabinet Chair for Sight/Vision and Hearing/Speech through Lions for 5SW.



Barbara Himelfarb

Barbara Himelfarb, M.A., principal, Himelfarb Consulting, has been a business consultant for over 20 years focusing on the intersection of strategic planning and operational implementation. Her expertise spans business process redesign, change management, high stakes meeting facilitation, project management, leadership development, customized training, team effectiveness, and action/organizational learning.

She has been able to combine extensive experience in total quality management with organization development work, and for three years she was actively involved with the Minnesota Council for Quality as an award examiner, trainer, and facilitator. Barb specializes in healthcare and has consulted with organizations such as Allina, Benedictine Health System, United Healthcare, Agensian Healthcare, Medtronic, and Best Buy. She also served as an adjunct faculty member for the University of St. Thomas. Barb holds a bachelors degree from the University of Minnesota, and a master's degree in Organization Learning and Development through the University of St. Thomas.

Now "semi-retired," Barb and husband, Simon, who are recent "transplants" to South Dakota from the Minneapolis, Minnesota area, are enjoying life in the beautiful Black Hills. They have a son, Doug, and two grandchildren, Jane and Julian.

Julaine and Barb, we are pleased to have you join our talented Board team.



VISION FOR A LIFETIME



A CHRISTMAS STORY

Christmas gift of Sight

"A Christmas Story" conjures up memories of the movie where a bespectacled boy named Ralphie dreams of getting the perfect Christmas gift, a BB gun. On Christmas morning, after Ralphie looked frantically for a box that would hold the BB gun, he finds one last present under the tree. The film ends with Ralphie lying in bed with his BB gun with a voiceover stating this was the best present he had ever received or would ever receive.

At Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF), we have the privilege of taking part in "A Christmas Story" every year through NPEF's **Christmas Gift of Sight**, a program that awards sight-saving surgery to those in need. This year's Christmas story is that of Cathy Mayes, who like Ralphie had only one wish for Christmas. Cathy's wish was to regain her sight.

In the fall of 2009, Cathy noticed her vision began rapidly changing. "Everything looked like I was looking at a funny mirror at an amusement park." She learned she had a macular hole in her right eye, making her close to legally blind. Surgery was her only option, and the longer it was put off, the less chance for her to regain her vision. Due to existing medical bills, no insurance and estimated surgery cost of fifteen thousand dollars, Cathy began to face the prospect of going blind. "I don't give up on life. It's too valuable," Cathy stated. However, at Thanksgiving, she insisted her six children, ten grandchildren and five step-grandchildren gather for a family picture, in case something happened.

To continue to work, her office was equipped with low vision devices and a large flat screen monitor. She struggled to drive and her pursuit of her bachelor's degree had to be put on hold, as on-line coursework was not available in large print.



Sharon Zeller, NPEF Board Chair, Presents Cathy with C&OS Award

Dr. Nathan Weiderholt and Dr. Anne Britton suggested submitting an application to NPEF's **Christmas Gift of Sight**. Shortly before Christmas, Cathy was informed she was awarded the **Christmas Gift of Sight**. "Never would I have ever thought this would be possible," she

tearfully recalled. "I felt like part of a fairytale." Like Ralphie, Cathy felt this was the best present she ever would receive. But, she faced a long journey ahead.

Dr. Prema Abraham of Black Hills Regional Eye Institute performed the surgery to repair the macular hole. In order for the eye to heal properly, Cathy had to lay face down for two weeks, not moving from her position and taking all sustenance through a straw. Post-surgery, "I saw a huge difference," she said.



Cathy and Husband, Don, Meet with Dr. Spencer Pre-Op

Later, Cathy began noticing halos when she looked at things. "I was really scared something major was wrong," she said. She'd just learned her son and his fiancé were expecting their first child, and was worried she would never see her new grandbaby.

The diagnosis was cataracts, often a result of eye surgery. She was referred to Dr. Terry Spencer at Black Hills Regional Eye Institute, who performed cataract surgery. Her prognosis – except for reading, she no longer has to wear glasses, which she has worn since 8 years of age.

"I have never been so touched by anything in my life, and I now plan to utilize this wonderful gift of sight to prove hope exists for others," Cathy gratefully said. "This gift has reaffirmed my belief in people and the spirit of giving. With the blessing of my husband and children, we will be looking at those who do not have anything, and hopefully be more caring, understanding and giving for all." Cathy plans to resume work on her Bachelors in Chemical Dependency Counseling, a goal she aspires to reach by 2014, so she can continue to help others in her community. "I tell people every day, be thankful for everything you have in your life."



Dr. Spencer Implants New Intraocular Lens during Cataract Surgery

NPEF extends its thanks to area eye care professionals for their support of the Christmas Gift of Sight program, and to program sponsors, Black Hills Regional Eye Institute, Black Hills Power, Rapid City Downtown and Rushmore Lions Clubs and First Interstate Bank.

To share in the joy of giving the **Christmas Gift of Sight**, donate today at ChristmasGiftofSight.com, or phone (605) 716-6733. Merry Christmas, Cathy.

LIONS, AND PANCAKES, AND REINDEER, OH MY!

On a cold, blustery Saturday morning in November, Lions Club volunteers joined forces to serve up hot cakes and sausages in Rapid City's Main Street Square to kick off its Holiday Festival and raise funds for the Northern Plains Eye Foundation Western South Dakota Lions Children's Vision Screening Initiative (CVSI).

Thanks to the efforts of the Rapid City Community Pride, Downtown, Evening Star, Metro and Rushmore Lions Clubs, \$1150 was presented to Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) to benefit CVSI to ensure vision screenings are accessible to more children throughout the region.

Oh, yes, the reindeer. In addition to the pancake breakfast, festivities included a present hunt, Santa's vacation house and live reindeer sleigh rides.

**Thank you,
Rapid City Lions Clubs!**



Servin' it Up, Lions Style



Hot Coffee and Cool Lions

PARTNERS SUPPORT KEY TO LAUNCH OF CHILDREN'S VISION SCREENING INITIATIVE

Northern Plains Eye Foundation Western South Dakota Lions Children's Vision Screening Initiative (CVSI) is the culmination of over a year of research by Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) and numerous collaborative partners, who have provided insights, backing and vision to develop the initiative and continue to be involved in facilitating the CVSI launch.

"CVSI is an extensive undertaking with a worthwhile goal of making vision screenings accessible to more children throughout the region, leading to more timely diagnosis and appropriate intervention," said Ronda Gusinsky, NPEF Executive Director. "In its first year, CVSI hopes to screen a minimum of 1,000 children. In three to five years, we hope to expand CVSI across the state of South Dakota," she continued. "This can only be accomplished by creating long-term and mutually beneficial partnerships."

According to Gusinsky, CVSI is based on a well-established and very successful vision screening model launched by the University of Wyoming Institute for Disabilities in 1999, which has screened over 55,000 children to date. Since 2009, this project has included use of the PediaVision Assessment Solution, a video photo screening device that utilizes a non-invasive approach to obtain comprehensive, accurate screening results indicating why a child should be "referred" to an eye care specialist. "While only an eye care professional can diagnose and treat a vision problem, vision screenings find children who need a full eye exam," she stated.

South Dakota Optometric Society (SDOS) President, Dr. Bill Holec, whose organization awarded a \$1,000 grant to NPEF in support of CVSI, sees CVSI as a way to continue SDOS's commitment to help kids on a path to healthy vision. "I'd like to think that every parent brings

their child in for an eye exam, but that's just not always the case," he stated. "One of the key reasons we support this initiative is because it brings the screening to the child, which will ensure all children receive proper care."

Long-time Lions Club members and CVSI advocates, George Brown of Rapid City Downtown Lions, and Dick Tupper of Rushmore Lions, say local Lions Clubs' support comes from a similar perspective. "Lions have always supported sight-related programs and services, and this project with Northern Plains will go a long way in furthering our mission," Brown stated.

"There is a definite need for this program," Tupper added. "Working together with Northern Plains, we can accomplish much more to serve children in our communities."

Brown and Tupper's Rapid City Downtown and Rushmore Lions Clubs, as well as Piedmont Valley Lions Club, have pledged their financial support, as well as volunteer resources to CVSI. Volunteers from the three clubs have signed up to be trained to administer the PediaVision Assessment Solution screenings in order to provide children's vision screening outreach in their respective communities.

CVSI presentations are also being made to other area Lions Clubs, who are invited to join the Rapid City Downtown, Rushmore and Piedmont clubs as CVSI partners, in order to grow the project outreach and make the free vision screenings accessible to more children throughout the region.

Local Lions Clubs and other organizations and individuals who are interested in learning more about CVSI are invited to contact NPEF at (605) 716-6733 for more information or to schedule a presentation.

***"...we support this
initiative because it
brings the screening
to the child..."***

Dr. Bill Holec, President
South Dakota Optometric Society

ROTARY CLUB CVSI BENEFIT JAN. 24 AT MURPHY'S

You can help make vision screenings accessible to more children,
just buying dinner at Murphy's!

**The Rapid City Rotary Club Invites You To A Benefit Dinner
TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, AT MURPHY'S PUB & GRILL**

A portion of the food sales and all tips will benefit the Children's Vision Screening Initiative (CVSI)!
For reservations, phone (605) 415-8988.



VISION FOR A LIFETIME



MEET HEALTH-CARE EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT JERIKA (IHNEN) KIRWAN

Like all “proud parents,” Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) is pleased to have opportunity to brag about our “kid’s” successes! Here, in her own words, is the story of NPEF 2007 **Health-Care Education Scholarship** recipient, Jerika (Ihnen) Kirwan, who received consecutive Health-Care Education Scholarship awards to complete her undergraduate studies in interdisciplinary sciences pre-optometry – summa cum laude – at South Dakota School of Mines & Technology.



“My name is Jerika (Ihnen) Kirwan. I was blessed with being the recipient of the NPEF Health-Care Education Scholarship throughout my undergraduate program at South Dakota School of Mines & Technology (SDSM&T). This May, I graduated summa cum laude and received my bachelor’s degree in interdisciplinary sciences pre-optometry. This fall, I started my first semester at University of Missouri – St. Louis College of Optometry.

The NPEF scholarship helped fund my tuition at SDSM&T, which allowed me to focus on my studies, as well as have the opportunity to be involved in campus extracurricular activities, giving me the chance to grow as an individual and share in serving my community. Throughout my four years of school, I was a member of the Lady Hardrocker basketball team, Leadership Development Team, Aurum Student Newspaper, Student Activities and Leadership Center, Student Ambassador, Orientation Leader, M-Week co-chair, Women in Science and Engineering, Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society, Peer Advisor, Circle K member, American Optometric Student Association Special Member, and helped develop the new Pre-Professional Health Club.

While at School of Mines, I was honored to be inducted into the Leadership Hall of Fame and was honored to receive the following: CHAD Award Recipient, Gustafson Scholarship Award Recipient, Dean’s List (8 Semesters), 12 Intramural Championships, Ms. Mines, Homecoming Royalty, Richardson Scholarship Recipient, and the Tech Challenge Scholarship Recipient.

In my career at School of Mines as a Lady Hardrocker Basketball Player, I attained NAIA Scholar Athlete, DAC Scholar Athlete, KOTA Player of the Week, DAC Player of the Week, DAC Freshman of the Year, Highest Field Goal Percentage, Most Rebounds, and Defensive MVP. Additionally, I joined the 1,000 Point Club this year, broke 3 school records (Game, Season, and Career Field Goal Percentage), and attained 4 varsity letters. I was chosen to be co-captain at the end of my sophomore year, and sought to inspire my teammates to become better athletes, students, and individuals.



For my senior capstone project, I completed a research proposal on the “Feasibility for a Statewide Preschool Vision Screening Program for Amblyopia in South Dakota.” I was fortunate to have the opportunity to have Dr. Monte Dirks, Ophthalmologist at Black Hills Regional Eye Institute and long-time NPEF Board of Director, as my expert advisor. With his support and guidance, I was able to access research and statistics gathered by Northern Plains Eye Foundation from its Healthy Vision Week, which I included in my proposal in support of enhancing free children’s vision screenings efforts.

My goal is to one day return to South Dakota as a knowledgeable, respected optometrist. Every dream begins with the first step. I certainly made mine in the right direction as a student of the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, supported by NPEF’s Health-Care Education Scholarship program.”

If Jerika’s story inspires you, please consider supporting NPEF’s **Health-Care Education Scholarship** program through your donation or sponsorship of a scholar, such as Jerika.



HEALTH-CARE EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE

In recognition of the need for future health-care and eye-care professionals in our region, Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) is celebrating its eighth year of granting **Health-Care Education Scholarships** to outstanding high school graduates pursuing full-time undergraduate health-care related studies.

Since the **Health-Care Education Scholarship** program’s inaugural year, NPEF has awarded sixty-four Health-Care Education Scholarships totaling \$60,500, reflecting NPEF’s strong commitment to the education of future eye-care and health-care professionals.

NPEF will again bestow the **Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman Memorial Health-Care Education Scholarship** to the most distinguished scholar. This award, presented to its first recipient, Steven A. Turpin, in 2011, is awarded in honor of Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman, a former 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.

Scholarship application materials are available through high school guidance counselors, on-line at www.npef.org/scholarship, or by phoning (605) 716-6733 to request an application packet be mailed or emailed. Applications must be postmarked by March 1, 2012.

If you are interested in sponsoring a scholar, please contact the Foundation office at (605) 716-6733.

4TH ANNUAL HEALTHY VISION WEEK HELD OCTOBER 3 – 7, 2011



This fall's **Healthy Vision Week**, held October 3 through 7, celebrates the fourth anniversary of Northern Plains Eye Foundation's (NPEF) initiative to preserve children's sight in western South Dakota.

Thanks to the ever-growing number of partnering eye care professionals from across the Black Hills and Pierre, who donate their skills and expertise to provide the screenings, this community service program has grown significantly from just over 250 children screened in 2008, to screening close to 430 children this fall.

Our sincere thanks to the 46 eye care professionals listed below, who with NPEF, continue to make healthy vision a priority for children in our region.

RAPID CITY

Advanced Dermatology and Ophthalmology

Timothy Minton, MD

Black Hills Regional Eye Institute

Monte Dirks, MD

Dan Hafner, MD

Stephen Khachikian, MD

Robert Nixon, MD

Scott Schirber, OD

Terry Spencer, MD

Budget Optical

Elizabeth Ellender, OD

M. Scott Ellender, OD

Cary Feldman, OD

Brad Moriarty, OD

Eye Works

Pauline Weichler, OD

Pearle Vision

Anne Britton, OD

Pillen Optical

Dan Clousing, OD

RAPID CITY

Precision Eyecare

Eric Porisch, OD

Premier Eyecare, PC

Jared Pearson, OD

Shopko Optical

Greg Sorensen, OD

Slingsby & Wright Eye Care

Dawn Wattenhofer, OD

The Eye Doctors at

Rapid City Medical Center

Gail Bernard, MD

Joseph Hartford, OD

Mary Buurma, PA-C

Drs. Tucker-Kudrna-Holec-Young

Eye Care Centre

Lynn Tucker, OD

Gaylene Kudrna, OD

Bill Holec, OD

Falon Young, OD

Vision Center

Robert Wilson, OD

Vision West Eye Care

Dwayne Ice, OD

BELLE FOURCHE

Black Hills Vision Care

Heidi Nash, OD

James Trimble, OD

CUSTER

Premier Family Eyecare

Nathan Wiederholt, OD

DEADWOOD

Deadwood Eyecare

Michael Guilbert, OD

David Czerny, OD

HOT SPRINGS

Advanced Eyecare

Dallas Wilkinson, OD

PIERRE

Beemer and Bartlett Eye Clinic

Douglas C. Beemer, OD

Michael R. Bartlett, OD

PIERRE

Doctors of Optometry

Jeffrey Rausch, OD

Denette Eisnach, OD

Jill Hart, OD

SPEARFISH

Family Optical

Tammy Hersch, OD

Lifetime Eyecare

Scott Kennedy, OD

Spearfish Eye Care Center

Kathy Haivala, OD

Michael Richey, OD

Spearfish Vision Works

Brian Gill, OD

STURGIS

J&J Optical

M. Scott Ellender, OD

Northern Hills Eye Care

David Prosser, OD

Jason Hafner, OD

EXPERTS PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION ON GLAUCOMA

Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) would like to recognize and thank Monte Dirks, M.D., Ophthalmologist with Black Hills Regional Eye Institute who is fellowship trained in glaucoma and clinical research in dry eye and glaucoma, and John R. Samples, M.D., former Professor of Ophthalmology at the Oregon Health and Sciences University and the Casey Eye Institute in Portland, OR, who now practices at Specialty Eye Care in Parker, CO, for their recent seminars at NPEF's October 29, 2011, Educational Presentation on Glaucoma.

In addition, NPEF thanks Jake Forsline and Alcon Laboratories for their support of Dr. John R. Samples' keynote presentation.

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Rapid City Area Chamber of Commerce

Rapid City Downtown Lions Club
Rapid City Metro Lions Club
Drs. Jeffrey L. Rausch, Denette K. Eismach,
Jill M. Hart - Doctors of Optometry
Dr. Jeffrey & Diane Rausch
Dr. Erwin & Joan Reimann
RESPEC Consulting and Services
Drs. Michael Richey & Kathy Haivala -
Spearfish Eye Care Center
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Dr. Paul Wright
Wright Vision Center
Tom & Sharon Zeller

THANK YOU 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.



BLACK HILLS REGIONAL
EYE INSTITUTE



We Serve

Rapid City Downtown and
Rushmore Lions Clubs

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RESEARCH



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VISION
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COMING ATTRACTIONS

Happy New Year - January 1, 2012

NPEF Health-Care Education Scholarship
Applications Available - January 3, 2012

Rapid City Rotary Club Fundraiser to Benefit CVSI
Murphy's Pub & Grill, Rapid City - January 24, 2012

NPEF Health-Care Education Scholarship
Application Deadline - March 1, 2012

NPEF Board of Directors Meeting - March 15, 2012

NORTHERN PLAINS EYE
FOUNDATION

