



NORTHERN PLAINS EYE  
FOUNDATION

# THE EYE OPENER

WINTER 2018

## GIVING SOMETHING BACK

As we were writing this newsletter, the news broke of our 41st President, George H. W. Bush, passing away. In the news coverage, there were numerous articles, one in which President Bush was quoted, "The American Dream means giving it your all, trying your hardest, accomplishing something. And then to that I'd add, giving something back. No definition of a successful life can do anything without including serving others."

for hundreds of area tradespeople on how to prevent disabling workplace eye injuries and we fund a scholarship endowment for medical students pursuing ophthalmology, many of whom hope to return to South Dakota to care for our residents. We give the gift of sight to underserved adults whose livelihood is threatened by vision loss, like a 59-year old woman who, due to rapidly



Sight-saving Surgeries



Research on Childhood Vision



Workplace Safety Training



Free Children's Vision Screenings

That statement made us pause and reflect for a moment. Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF), like most nonprofits, exists because of those who believe in giving something back, in serving others. NPEF's roots, which go back over 30 years, began with eye care professionals and community-minded individuals and organizations wishing to be in service to others. This initially took the form of financial gifts that provided funding for the purchase of vision-related equipment, research and education programs, assistance to individuals with low vision, and support for children's eye screening events.

Today, serving others through NPEF continues to take a similar form. NPEF serves over 5,000 children every year, providing free vision screenings to assure early detection of vision disorders, like the 5-year old whose screening revealed bilateral cataracts that would have led to permanent blindness if left untreated. We provide safety training

developing cataracts, was becoming isolated and dependent on others, as she lives on a ranch 60 miles from town and could no longer see to drive. And, through a partnership with medical students at the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine, we are part of groundbreaking research on detecting childhood vision issues in South Dakota.

The photos on this page are just a handful from NPEF's 2018 "album." Pictures from NPEF's various programming efforts, times when, through generous donors "giving something back," we are serving others.

As we come to the end of another successful year, we want to thank those who have contributed to NPEF's success by "giving something back." **We invite you to consider a year-end gift to NPEF to sustain our work to protect and preserve vision and restore sight and help us continue serving others through your gifts.**

*Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to protect and preserve vision and restore sight for people of the Northern Plains.*

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# MEDICAL STUDENTS & NPEF CARRY OUT GROUNDBREAKING CHILDREN'S VISION RESEARCH

When Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) began the Children's Vision Screening Initiative (CVSI) in 2012, 42 out of 50 states in the US had mandatory legislation requiring childhood vision screenings; however, South Dakota was, and remains, one of those eight states without a requirement.

One of the foundations of CVSI is advocacy for all South Dakota children to receive vision screenings prior to beginning school. NPEF understood to move forward, it must create awareness and garner support regarding the benefits of early childhood vision screening. Since CVSI's launch in 2012, over 25,000 free vision screenings have been administered by NPEF across the Black Hills region. With each screening, expansive data is captured, which has been input to a database and warehoused for analysis.

In 2014, NPEF began a collaboration with students attending the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine (USDSSM), who over the past four years have conducted the first children's vision screening research studies in the state of South Dakota. The first study, conducted by USDSSM student Daniel Terveen and Jess Moser, OD, and published in *South Dakota Medicine* in March 2015, describes the results of the first children's vision screening program in the state, CVSI, which noted 11.9% of South Dakota children receiving a CVSI screening had risk factors detected, and as a result, were referred for comprehensive eye exams. The second, a study of the barriers for parents/guardians in getting a comprehensive eye exam for their children who were referred for follow-up care due to risk factors detected in their CVSI screening, was authored by USDSSM students Taylor Slingsby and Paul Mallory and subsequently published in *South Dakota Medicine* in January 2017. In this study, when parents/guardians who did not attend a follow up appointment for a comprehensive eye exam for their at-risk child were surveyed, multiple barriers were identified that included not feeling a comprehensive

eye exam was warranted, higher priority family issues such as illness, housing or food, concerns with scheduling an appointment or not being able to arrange an appointment around their work schedule, worries about cost or Medicaid coverage, and difficulty in arranging transportation.

In May of 2018, USDSSM student researchers, Jed Assam, Tanner Ferguson, and Nicole West authored the third manuscript published in *South Dakota Medicine*, which assessed the quality of screening methods used in CVSI by comparing vision screening data collected by CVSI to evaluations provided in follow-up appointments at professional eye care clinics.

The study conclusion stated, "This quality assessment of the screening efforts by NPEF in the CVSI project using the SPOT™ vision screening device has identified highly favorable preliminary results. This has been demonstrated both in terms of the quality in SPOT™ device performance on the identification of amblyopic risk factors, capacity for measuring refractive errors, and through screening follow-up benefit that is reflected in the high percentage of children who received treatment on referral to professional eye care services. Vision screening performed using the SPOT™ device represents a valuable modality that is easily employable and can provide tremendous benefit to children of the state of South Dakota. It provides a way to help further ensure the healthy development of vision for children by allowing for timely and effective professional referral when needed."

NPEF is truly grateful for the efforts of these USDSSM students and extremely proud of the published works. **If you would like to receive copies of the published research studies or wish to support NPEF's childhood vision screening efforts to ensure young South Dakotans are given every chance for success in learning and life, please contact us or go to [npef.org](http://npef.org) and click "Make an Online Contribution."**



## EYE TO EYE

We are blessed to live in the beautiful Black Hills – to see the magnificent winter wonderland that unfolds across the countryside this time of year. However, not everyone has this great pleasure. There are many in our region who struggle to see.

At NPEF, our staff and Board work to protect and preserve vision for today and generations to come. Oftentimes, through our CVSI free vision screenings, we hear stories from school nurses or grateful parents about children who have been helped through our free vision screening. Little ones, who upon receiving their first pair of glasses, express amazement at seeing a fly, leaf on a tree, or plane in the sky for the first time. If children struggle to see, they will struggle to learn. 80% of what a child learns in a normal classroom setting is through vision. We, along with area schools, school nurses, Lions Club volunteers, and eye care professionals, are passionate about serving children, as well as other individuals, who struggle to see. Help us make their Holidays Bright. Please consider donating to ensure our work to end vision loss continues serving children, adults, and families across the beautiful Black Hills region.

*Happy Holidays*



*from the NPEF Staff  
& Board of Directors!*



# CASINO royale

6<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY



**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29TH,** Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) celebrated the 6th Anniversary Casino Royale Charity Affair. Thanks to our guests, sponsors, promotional partners, auction and event donors, and volunteers over \$22,500 in net proceeds was raised to support our work to end vision loss. We especially want to acknowledge and express our gratitude to our Casino Royale sponsors noted below, whose support makes it possible to host our "Party with a Purpose," which has raised almost \$135,000 in net proceeds since the 2013 inaugural event.



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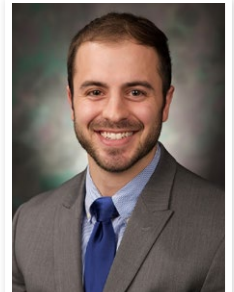
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# NORTHERN PLAINS EYE FOUNDATION NEWS BRIEFS

**MARCH, SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2018** | Due to an estimated 2,000 daily on-the-job eye injuries in the US, NPEF brought its **Workplace Vision Wellness free eye safety presentation** to several hundred members of the operations and trades teams at the US Forest Service Mystic Ranger District and Black Hills Energy locations this year. The training covers topics such as workplace eye hazards, types of eye protection, and what to do in the case of an eye injury. Our thanks to Dr. Terry Spencer, Vice Chair of NPEF's Board and Ophthalmologist with Black Hills Regional Eye Institute, who volunteers his time and expertise on behalf of NPEF to present this training. **If you are in the construction and trades industries and would like to offer a Workplace Vision Wellness presentation to your employees, contact NPEF at (605) 716-6733.**



**MAY 2018** | USD Sanford School of Medicine announces **Keegan Mechels as the 2018 Recipient of the Northern Plains Eye Foundation Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman Memorial Scholarship.** Mechels completed his undergraduate at Drake University in Iowa, majoring in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. He noted, "My heart has been in ophthalmology even before I came to USD, and my experiences in research and with various attendings have only solidified I made the right choice." Mechels plans to apply for a match in ophthalmology, ideally going to a larger academic center to continue research and gain experience with a large volume of surgeries as a resident, ultimately hoping to return to his hometown of Sioux Falls to practice. In the meantime, he started the process of forming a Vision and Ophthalmology Interest Group at USD to educate those who may benefit from more knowledge of ophthalmology, prep students for residency applications, and give back to the community.



**JUNE 2018** | Each June, NPEF takes the opportunity to thank the volunteers of the area Lions Clubs who contribute hundreds of hours each year to support the Northern Plains Eye Foundation Western South Dakota Lions Children's Vision Screening Initiative (CVSI). This year these amazing volunteers contributed nearly 585 hours assisting NPEF in performing over 5,000 free vision screenings for pre-school and elementary age children across the Black Hills to identify potential risk factors that may inhibit proper childhood vision development. **We congratulate CVSI Volunteer of the Year, Dick Fischer, Piedmont Valley Lions; CVSI Volunteer Couple of the Year, Sherry & Norm Denke, Rapid City Metro Lions; and, CVSI Club of the Year, Piedmont Valley Lions. Hear them ROAR!**



**OCTOBER 2018** | World Sight Day is an annual international day of awareness to focus attention on blindness and vision impairment. This year, NPEF and numerous community partners joined together to celebrate World Sight Day and raise funds to serve children from 6 months of age to adults in their later years through NPEF's free children's vision screenings, sight-saving surgeries, workplace eye safety seminars, and scholarships for medical students pursuing ophthalmology. **A HUGE "shout out" to Spearfish School District who, on World Sight Day, October 11, enthusiastically donned their favorite pair of jeans and raised \$500 to support NPEF's vision-related community outreach!**



**THIS HOLIDAY SEASON** – and all year long – make shopping an opportunity to give! It's easy. Register at [smile.amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) and select Northern Plains Eye Foundation as your charitable organization. Then, each time you shop Amazon.com, Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Northern Plains Eye Foundation every time you shop, at no cost to you. So, **smile!**

**SHOP WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE**



**Supporting:  
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