

## FIND YOUR GOOD AND DO IT.



On a recent *Sunday Morning*, the CBS newsmagazine program, a segment featured Jon Bon Jovi's JBJ Soul Kitchen, a series of restaurants the rocker opened that help feed the needy. Bon Jovi, a Grammy-winning artist who's sold millions of records, described the sense of fulfillment he receives from helping another human being, stating, "The way to feel good is to do good, you know? Find your good and do it."

For over 30 years Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) has found "it's good" and, through community outreach, "do it," by helping people see – to learn, work, play, and live full and independent lives. Ensuring people see well begins with young children. Do you know babies need their vision checked? Preschoolers should have their eyes examined before starting school? Kids need their vision checked regularly because their eyes change as they grow? They do.

That's why NPEF's Children's Vision Screening Initiative (CVSI) free children's vision screenings are at the forefront of Foundation outreach. CVSI statistics reveal undetected vision disorders impact almost 12% of our children screened – that's over 600 kids every year. Often the child is simply in need of an eye exam and glasses, but other times conditions like amblyopia, or even cataracts, have been discovered – that without a vision screening – could have led to long-term vision loss or even blindness.

As parents, we inherently tend to think our children see well and something like this happens to "other kids." At NPEF's recent Casino Royale Charity Affair, Jackie Waldie shared the story of her and husband, Lyn, and their son, Seth, who was screened through CVSI and referred for a comprehensive eye exam. Jackie is a teacher and special education advocate, so in learning Seth's CVSI screening indicated risk factors were detected requiring a comprehensive eye exam, she was a bit dismayed. "I had no idea. He always sat close to the TV, but I thought that was because he loved Thomas the Tank Engine and was fascinated by the show."

She went on to describe, after receiving the results of Seth's CVSI screening, taking Seth to their family ophthalmologist, Dr. Scott Eccarius, and learning of Seth's diagnosis of strabismic amblyopia. "His right eye was turned and not working at all," she said. With glasses and amblyopia therapy, Seth's eye turn has been corrected with his vision in that eye returning, and he is now seeing 20/25 with correction.

“  
I CAN'T STRESS  
STRONGLY  
ENOUGH THE  
IMPORTANCE  
OF THE CVSI  
FREE VISION  
SCREENINGS...”

– JACKIE WALDIE ”

Concerned by Seth's diagnosis, Jackie and Lyn decided to have Dr. Eccarius perform a comprehensive eye exam on Seth's younger sister, Emily. Emily had a similar diagnosis and was prescribed glasses and amblyopia therapy, as well, which she is still undergoing to correct her vision.

"I can't stress strongly enough the importance of the CVSI free vision screenings and paying attention, from a very young age, to those signals," Waldie stated. "Early detection of vision problems increases children's chances of achieving a successful treatment outcome. It truly can make a difference between thriving in school or failing."

Want to "find your good and do it?" Please consider a year-end gift to NPEF to support the CVSI free vision screening program to ensure timely diagnosis and treatment of common childhood vision disorders continues for children like Seth.

**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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It's no secret one of the most important elements of a successful nonprofit is a strong and diverse Board. Anyone who knows me has likely heard me say Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) is blessed with a wonderful Board, and anyone who has served on a board knows a leadership position requires interest in the mission, dedication, and commitment. I would also hope – whether it's NPEF's Board or another – we could include "enjoyment of their role."

At the end of this month, three longtime NPEF Board Members are leaving us due to term limits – Linda Rydstrom, Dr. Terry Spencer, and Dr. Dallas Wilkinson. Each has served on our Board for almost a decade, providing integral leadership to create a legacy of vital community outreach.



**Linda Rydstrom**



**Dr. Terry Spencer**



**Dr. Dallas Wilkinson**

This legacy includes the NPEF Western South Dakota Lions Children's Vision Screening Initiative (CVSI), which has brought over 30,000 free children's vision screenings to young children in communities across the Black Hills to insure early detection of childhood vision disorders.

During their tenure, as well, NPEF created the Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman Memorial Scholarship Endowment, launched in partnership with the University of South Dakota Foundation to pay tribute in perpetuity to the mission of Northern Plains Eye Foundation and the life of Dr. Zimmerman. The scholarship, presented by way of the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine, is awarded annually to fourth year medical students pursuing ophthalmology to ensure quality eye care across the region for future generations.

Additionally, in the course of their leadership, NPEF began a collaboration with students at the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine to conduct the first ever children's vision screening research studies in the state of South Dakota. To date, four ground-breaking studies have published in *South Dakota Medicine*, the South Dakota State Medical Association peer-reviewed medical journal. A fifth study, planned for submission in 2020, is nearing completion.

Linda, Terry, and Dallas, on behalf of the Northern Plains Eye Foundation, please accept our deepest gratitude for the very important role you played in the mission of our Foundation. Your passion, leadership, and dedication inspire us and will continue to guide our Foundation's legacy. We sincerely hope you enjoyed your role on our Board and very much look to your continued friendship.

As we say goodbye to 2019, on behalf of the Board of Directors and Staff of Northern Plains Eye Foundation, may your holidays be bright, and your New Year be filled with health, happiness, and prosperity.

**Ronda Gusinsky,**  
*Executive Director*  
*Northern Plains Eye Foundation*

## THANK YOU, SOUTH DAKOTA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The South Dakota Community Foundation (SDCF) recently presented a \$6,000 South Dakota Fund grant to Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) to support technology upgrades necessary for NPEF's Children's Vision Screening Initiative (CVSI) overall vision screening outreach and ongoing research.

Since the launch of CVSI in 2012 and subsequent research in 2014, over 30,000 free vision screenings have been performed and massive amounts of data warehoused. "Technology upgrades were critical to enable our Foundation to effectively store and manage increasing volumes of data," noted Ronda Gusinsky, NPEF Executive Director.

"The South Dakota Community Foundation is proud to partner with Northern Plains Eye Foundation as they provide vital pediatric vision screenings and share data with others interested in ending vision loss," said Ginger Niemann, SDCF Senior Program Officer. "Children cannot be expected to perform well in school if their vision does not support learning."

NPEF extends its thanks to Rapid City Downtown, Metro, and Rushmore Lions Clubs, Piedmont Valley Lions Club, Rapid City Cosmopolitan Club, and Dick and Jackie Tupper for their donations toward matching fund support of the South Dakota Fund grant.



Beth Massa, SDCF Regional Director for Foundation Relations (center), presenting grant award to Dr. Ryan Scarborough, NPEF Board Chair, and Ronda Gusinsky, NPEF Executive Director

# CASINO royale

7<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY



We were genuinely delighted and sincerely grateful to have so many of you join us for the September 28th NPEF 7th Annual Casino Royale Charity Affair.

Thanks to our guests, sponsors, promotional partners, auction and event donors, and volunteers, we are proud to announce almost \$30,000 in net proceeds was raised to carry forward essential vision outreach NPEF provides to young and old across the region.

We especially wish 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."



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# NORTHERN PLAINS EYE FOUNDATION NEWS BRIEFS

**JUNE 2019** | NPEF was honored to be among ten local charities awarded funding by the Rapid City Cosmopolitan Club for working with youth and adults in our community to promote healthy lifestyles. The club distributed \$29,000 to area nonprofits at their annual Funds Distribution and Awards Luncheon and paid tribute to members for their volunteer efforts. Thank you, Rapid City Cosmopolitan Club!



**JUNE 2019** | Jeremy Kudrna is presented the 2019 Northern Plains Eye Foundation Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman Memorial Scholarship Endowment Award. Jeremy, a native of Rapid City, is a member of the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine Class of 2020. Jeremy is currently finishing up ophthalmology residency interviews and collaborating with NPEF on our fifth CVSI research project. After his ophthalmology residency and fellowship, Jeremy's goal is to return to the Black Hills.



**JUNE 2019** | Hear them Roar! Each June, NPEF hosts our Volunteer Picnic & Salute to thank our Lions Clubs volunteers who contribute hundreds of hours – 561 this year to be exact – to support the NPEF Western South Dakota Lions Children's Vision Screening Initiative (CVSI). **Congratulations to our 2019 CVSI Award Recipients: Volunteer of the Year, Arlene Moll, Metro Lions; Volunteer Couple of the Year, Wendy & Keith Clanton, Piedmont Valley Lions; and Club of the Year, Piedmont Valley Lions.**



**OCTOBER 2019** | Friday Jeans Day is a big deal at First Interstate Bank – and so is supporting the community! When **First Interstate Bank Rapid City Gateway & East employees** chose to donate their quarterly Jeans Day collections to NPEF, which **First Interstate Foundation** then matched – it was a big deal to us! Accepting the donation are NPEF Board Members Pokey Jacobson (2nd from right) and Craig Pfeifle (3rd from right). Our deepest thanks to First Interstate Bank!



**NOVEMBER 2019** | Meet Judy Mueller, NPEF's new Administrative Assistant. A native of Mitchell, SD, Judy and her husband, Wayne, found themselves visiting the Black Hills often and, ten years ago, decided to make it home! She also works in an administrative role with the Wesleyan Church, is mom to two, and grandma to nine. Welcome, Judy!



## WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS...

Linda Boland, retired after a 32 year career as a school nurse and Health Services Coordinator with Rapid City Area Schools, Monte Dirks, MD, retired from Black Hills Regional Eye Institute after 17 years of practice, Susan Kelts, retired after a 20 year career as a school nurse with Rapid City Area Schools, and John Walker, retired after 45 years as a CPA with Ketel Thorstenson, LLP where he led the firm accounting and auditing services.



Linda Boland



Monte Dirks, MD



Susan Kelts



John Walker



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