

GROWING THROUGH UNCERTAINTY...

For Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF), 2020 started as a time of excitement. In January, we began the New Year with a long-awaited strategic planning session. Prior to the session, interviews were conducted with individuals who regularly interact with NPEF and those who do not know us well, bringing to the forefront insights on the impact of our mission across the community. It introduced meaningful discussions about where we are and where we hope to go and provided a roadmap to the future vision of ourselves.

In late January, we were invited to partner with Monument Health to provide CVSI Free Children's Vision Screenings for Monument's first Health Summit at the Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo. This allowed NPEF to expand its CVSI Free Children's Vision Screening outreach to rural families who we are delighted to serve.

Then in February the coronavirus pandemic became a new term in our vocabulary, and 2020 pivoted drastically to a year of unexpected changes and unanticipated challenges – interruptions, safety concerns, increased critical needs, financial instability, to name a few. But also, innovation and inspiration.

Like most organizations, NPEF's day-to-day looked significantly different. Our offices closed to the public. Programs shifted or temporarily

stopped, and plans changed, and changed again. More new vernaculars were added like PPP (Paycheck Protection Program), of which NPEF turned out to be a grateful beneficiary.

But during this time, we also made encouraging inroads. One of the goals set forth in NPEF's Strategic Plan is to address providing access to basic eye care to low income individuals in our community. Working through a partnership with student researchers at the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine and a new collaboration with Community Health Center of the Black Hills (CHCBH), an Eye Care Community Needs Assessment was launched to gather data to analyze what gaps exist. (See page 2, "Improving Access to Eye Care.") We look forward to the opportunity to review the findings and move forward with next steps.

To address the interim need for basic eye care for the underserved, NPEF also launched a pilot for its newest outreach program, VisionCARE. Through another unique collaboration with CHCBH, CHCBH patients who need assistance and meet VisionCARE criteria are provided a voucher for an eye exam and prescription glasses. Voucher recipients are seen by VisionCARE network eye care providers, Independent Optical and Vision Source Specialists. Thanks to these partner eye care providers offering NPEF discounted fees to underwrite their services, voucher recipients receive their eye exams and prescription glasses free of charge, which for many can be the difference between a life of poverty and dependence and a life of self-reliance. (See page 3, News Briefs, "December 2020.")

So, while 2020 has certainly meant navigating crisis, for NPEF it has also meant generating new solutions to vision-related challenges confronting our community and discovering how to build novel plans that can help NPEF continue to pursue its mission and serve unmet eye care needs.

We do this with great passion and commitment and invite you to join us on this journey. We enthusiastically extend an invitation to have a conversation with us on our strategic plan vision. We gratefully accept donations to support our work. And, we eagerly open our doors to your volunteerism, should you have interest in serving on a committee or our Board of Directors to guide our future.

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

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Nonprofit organizations are powered by the passion and dedication of their Board of Directors and staff. Board service is considered the highest level of volunteerism with board members playing a crucial role in the mission of the organization and the people it serves.

Since my tenure began with Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) in 2009, we have been immensely blessed with dedicated and passionate board volunteers. This year, they have led in an unprecedented time in which none of us have experienced the challenges before us. And this year more than ever, we counted on them to share their leadership knowledge, wisdom, and viewpoints to guide and inspire our work.

At the end of this month, three longtime members of NPEF's Board of Directors are leaving due to term limits – Julaine Arient-Rollman, Pokey Jacobson, and Craig Pfeifle. Each has served our Board for almost a decade, creating a legacy of vital community outreach.



**Julaine
Arient-Rollman**



**Pokey
Jacobson**



**Craig
Pfeifle**

Their dedicated leadership has brought over 33,000 CVSI Free Children's Vision Screenings to young children in the Black Hills

to insure early detection of childhood vision disorders. During their tenure, as well, NPEF has gifted over 70 sight-saving surgeries to restore vision, independence, and livelihood for those served by the Gift of Sight program.

Additionally, in the course of their leadership, NPEF began its collaboration with the University of South Dakota, creating the Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman Memorial Scholarship Endowment. The scholarship pays tribute in perpetuity to the mission of NPEF and the life of Dr. Zimmerman, and through its annual award to University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine (USDSSM) medical students pursuing ophthalmology, ensures quality eye care for future generations. Furthermore, through this affiliation, a relationship began with students at USDSSM who, in partnership with NPEF, conducted the first ever children's vision screening research in our state. To date, four pioneering studies have published in *South Dakota Medicine*, the South Dakota State Medical Association peer-reviewed journal, and a fifth study is planned for submission in 2020. A sixth research project on the eye care needs of Western South Dakotans, a new groundbreaking study, is underway.

Julaine, Pokey, and Craig, 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 legacy. We sincerely hope you have enjoyed your role and found the experience rewarding. We very much look to your continued friendship.

And, for all who read this, we carry you in our hearts throughout the holiday season and as we move into the New Year, wishing you peace, continued health, and ever present moments of joy.

Ronda Gusinsky
Executive Director
Northern Plains Eye Foundation

IMPROVING ACCESS TO EYE CARE

Basic eye care is an overlooked component of healthcare for the underserved in our community. Often an eye exam and prescription glasses are financially out of reach and, in many instances, government-funded and private healthcare do not offer low-cost basic eye care, such as an eye exam and prescription glasses.

Vision loss comes at a large cost, significantly impairing personal safety, job performance, employment opportunities, and more, leading to loss of independence and livelihood. For many, gaining access to an eye exam and prescription glasses can be a simple but powerful path to seeing and living better.

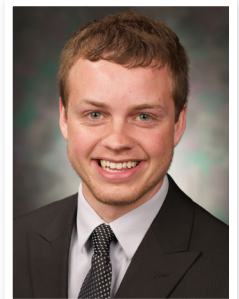
A priority objective in the Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) Strategic Plan focuses on understanding this unmet need and implementing improved access to eye care for the underserved.

NPEF took its first steps toward this goal earlier this year, working in collaboration with fourth-year University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine (USDSSM) student researchers, Adam Bleeker and Carson Eisenbeisz, along with Community Health Center of the Black Hills (CHCBH), to develop a survey to assess our communities' eye care needs.

In October, following approval by the USDSSM Institutional Review Board, an Eye Care Needs Assessment was launched through a paper and online survey offered to patients of CHCBH. Once the survey period concludes, Bleeker and Eisenbeisz will begin analysis of the data with a plan to present their conclusions next year. Next steps include submitting the conclusions for publication to a medical peer review journal, along with continuing conversations to broaden common understanding and identifying a collective path to serve the economically disadvantaged in our community for whom basic eye care is not otherwise accessible.



Adam Bleeker
MS4, USD Sanford
School of Medicine



Carson Eisenbeisz
MS4, USD Sanford
School of Medicine



NORTHERN PLAINS EYE FOUNDATION NEWS BRIEFS



CASINO royale

SOCIAL DISTANCING STYLE
thru SEPTEMBER 26, 2020

With the ongoing effects of the coronavirus pandemic, Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) made the tough decision to cancel Casino Royale Charity Affair, our only annual fundraiser.

While we were deeply disappointed to not host Casino Royale in our trademark style, we could not risk the wellbeing of our guests.

Thanks to sponsors, who generously supported our cause by donating their sponsorships, and donors who graciously joined in, our Casino Royale "Social Distancing Style" Fundraiser was a great success – raising almost \$40,000 in net proceeds.

This means the world to us. We could not be more humbled by your support and look forward, with great anticipation, to seeing you face-to-face at next year's Casino Royale on Saturday, September 25, 2021.



JANUARY 2020 | After months of planning, NPEF gathered for a day of introspection and dialogue at Fork Real Community Café to begin creating the roadmap for our Foundation's future service to our community. Guided by the Chapman Group's Malcom Chapman and Pam Teaney Thomas, NPEF board and committee volunteers, a medical student researcher, and staff team focused their energies to establish long-term goals and action plans to reach them!

FEBRUARY 2020 | Thanks to an invitation from Monument Health to partner with them in presenting health screenings at Monument's first Health Summit at the Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo, NPEF "cowboyed up" to bring CVSI Free Children's Vision Screenings (and neon sunglasses courtesy of Monument Health) to several hundred rural families in town for the event.

JULY 2020 | Abby Nieuwsma was presented the 2020 NPEF Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman Memorial Scholarship Endowment Award. Abby, a native of Sioux Falls, is a member of the USD Sanford School of Medicine Class of 2021. She is currently finishing ophthalmology residency interviews and enjoying final clinical rotations. After her residency and fellowship, she plans to practice ophthalmology in the Midwest, and pursue international mission work.

AUGUST 2020 | Our annual Volunteer Picnic & Salute for Lions volunteers was presented via "social distancing" this year to thank the Lions who contributed 350 volunteer hours to support NPEF's Children's Vision Screening Initiative (CVSI). **Congratulations to 2020 CVSI Award Recipients: Dick Fischer, Volunteer of the Year, Piedmont Valley Lions; Wendy & Keith Clanton, Volunteer Couple of the Year, Piedmont Valley Lions; and Piedmont Valley Lions, Club of the Year.** (Shown at right, Kathi & Ted Pukas, accept Piedmont Valley Lions Club award – and cookies!)

DECEMBER 2020 | It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas at Independent Optical, The Eye Doctors at Rapid City Medical Center, and Wright Vision Center/Slingsby & Huot Eye Associates/Your Eyes Only Optical! These generous eye care providers are displaying colorful donation forms to raise funds for NPEF's newest program, VisionCARE, that provides access to eye exams and glasses to low income individuals. **Give sight this Christmas. Support VisionCARE by donating at these eye care providers or call our office at (605) 716-6733 to make a credit card donation!**



WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS...

Every year, when we elect new members to our Board of Directors, we are inspired by their excitement and willingness to serve. In 2021, we welcome two new board members: Tenise Chapman and Jackie Vesely.

Tenise is originally from Webster, South Dakota. After 14 years working in the financial industry, she recently began working full time at Black Hills Tire, a business she and her husband, Weston, started in 2018, which received the 2020 Small Business of the Year Award from Black Hills Community Economic Development.

Jackie is a lifelong resident of Rapid City. During her career she has worked in property management and finance, ultimately joining the family business, Courtesy Subaru, 16 years ago where she now serves as Co-Owner/Vice President and Dealer Principal.

Welcome Tenise and Jackie! We sincerely look forward to working with you!



Tenise Chapman



Jackie Vesely



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