

VISION FOR A LIFETIME

It has been said the “eyes are the windows to the soul,” meaning you can understand a person’s emotions and sometimes thoughts by looking into his or her eyes. At Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) we offer a different perspective – that the “eyes,” or more specifically eye health, are linked to a person’s overall well-being, success in school, employability, and independence, especially as individuals grow older.

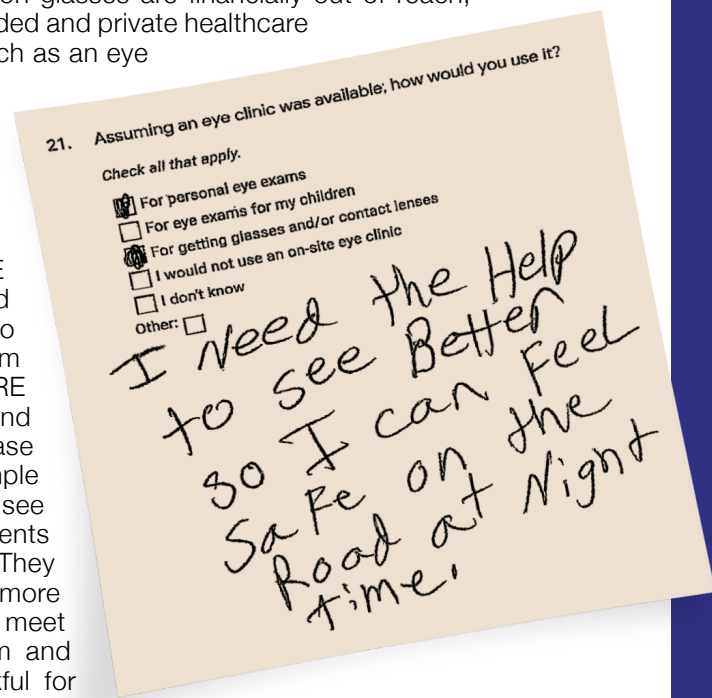
Our messaging through outreach programs such as the Children’s Vision Screening Initiative (CVSI), VisionCARE, and Gift of Sight, advocates that infants and toddlers need their vision checked, preschoolers should have their eyes screened before starting school, and school-age children have vision checks on a regular basis because eyes change as kids grow. For adults, an annual comprehensive eye exam is important not only to protect vision and overall eye health but may also provide clues that warn of underlying health issues elsewhere in the body.

For many of us, an annual eye exam is routine, often a “no-brainer.” But for countless low-income working-age adults and vulnerable populations, significant barriers exist in access to vision care. 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.

Knowing much of vision loss can be prevented and treated through routine comprehensive eye exams, NPEF launched VisionCARE, a collaboration with Community Health Center of the Black Hills (CHCBH). VisionCARE provides no-cost eye exams and glasses to CHCBH patients who have no other option for care and meet program guidelines. In its first year, VisionCARE has served dozens of individuals, and according to Nancy Miller, CHCBH case manager, VisionCARE is providing a simple but powerful path to helping people see better to live better. “Many of these patients are very low income or homeless. They often have other needs that become more pressing. When these patients return to meet with me after receiving their eye exam and glasses, they are so proud and thankful for their glasses,” Miller noted.

To advance the mission of eye health and take a deeper dive into understanding this largely unmet need in our community, for over a year now, NPEF has been working with CHCBH and University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine student researchers to assess our community’s eye care needs. Our end goal: Improve optometric services, education, and access to eye care for the underserved – and thus improve the well-being of our community by emphasizing the importance of vision for all and “Vision for a Lifetime,” NPEF’s longtime motto that continues to encapsulate the founding ideals of NPEF, a Foundation created over thirty years ago.

As we enter a new year, we will continue to gather data, explore community eye care models, and develop local partnerships to integrate eye health and vision care into existing programs to meet otherwise unmet eye care needs. It’s a tall order – a marathon not a sprint, as they say – but we are passionately committed and invite you to the table to join in this conversation or donate to sustain our work and the health and well-being of those we serve and the community in which we gratefully live.



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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When it comes to volunteering, one quarter of Americans take the time to volunteer and South Dakotans are at the top of the list. In a 2020 special report on states' volunteering, over 36% of South Dakotans volunteer.

Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) is a grateful recipient of this volunteer spirit. We are blessed with over 60 volunteers who serve on our board of directors and committees, assist in administering programs, give of their time at fundraising and promotional events, and support our cause in various other ways. Several have given of their time and talents for more than a decade.

What kind of person does that? Meet Curt Rising, who, along with his wife, Shirley, owns The Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy in Rapid City. Curt started his journey with NPEF in June of 2010 with a desire to do good and advance our mission. In 2014, Curt took on the responsibility of Board Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair, positions in which he has remained for the past seven years.



On the board, Curt shows up, is engaged, and strives to look at NPEF through both a strategic and operational lens, never shying away from asking the hard questions to bring out the best in our decision-making.

Most of all, Curt is an ambassador for NPEF. He and Shirley greet guests at our Casino Royale Charity Affair, in addition to The Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy serving as an event sponsor. As a matter of course, they invite friends and associates as guests to our events, recruit individuals to join our board, and personally support our cause.

From a staff perspective, Curt is a good listener who respects others' opinions, is willing to share his insights, and open to learning about the inner workings of a nonprofit. He is generous in saying "thank you," supportive, and always upbeat, reminding me of a quote I read recently: "Everything's possible and nothing's not."

Leadership like Curt's is crucial to our success as a nonprofit. At the end of this month, after a record-setting eleven plus years on NPEF's Board, Curt is leaving due to term limits. Thankfully, as the saying goes, "It's not goodbye, it's see you later," as he plans to continue on a few committees.

Curt, please accept our deepest gratitude for the very important role you played in our mission. Your passion, leadership, and dedication inspire us and will continue to guide our legacy.

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

Ronda Gusinsky
Executive Director
Northern Plains Eye Foundation

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS...

In January, Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) will welcome three new members to our Board of Directors.

Colin E. Brown, MD, is an ophthalmologist who specializes in cataract, cornea, and refractive surgery at Wright Vision Center. Dr. Brown was born in Rapid City and raised in Pierre. He received his bachelor's degree from South Dakota State University and medical doctorate from the University of South Dakota. Dr. Brown completed his ophthalmology residency at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and his fellowship at the Medical University of South Carolina.

Barbara Vargo lives in Rapid City with her husband. She graduated from the University of Minnesota and worked for a trade association in Washington, DC, and as volunteer coordinator for hospice programs in Florida and South Dakota. Barbara then obtained her law degree from Creighton University. After clerkships for South Dakota's Seventh Circuit and the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, she joined Lynn, Jackson, Shultz & Lebrun as an associate attorney in 2021. She has served on boards for Rapid City Public School Foundation, Catholic Social Services, South Dakota Hospice Organization, and LifeCircle South Dakota.

Renae Welke, OD, is an optometrist who practices at Slingsby & Huot Eye Associates. She received her Doctor of Optometry degree in 2011 from Pennsylvania College of Optometry. After graduation, Dr. Welke completed a Primary Care Residency Program at Salus University. Her optometric interests include primary and medical eye care, contact lenses, vision therapy, ocular disease, and ocular emergencies. Dr. Welke is a member of the American Optometric Association and the South Dakota Optometric Association. She is a native of the Black Hills and enjoys spending time outdoors with family and friends.

Welcome Colin, Barbara, and Renae! We are excited to have you bring your energy, ideas, and passion to our cause.



Dr. Colin Brown



Barbara Vargo



Dr. Renae Welke

NORTHERN PLAINS EYE FOUNDATION NEWS BRIEFS

CASINO
royale

CHARITY AFFAIR **ONLINE AUCTION**
GOES LIVE AT 6PM (MST)
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

With an unforeseen spike in COVID cases, Northern Plains Eye Foundation (NPEF) made the difficult decision to cancel its in-person Casino Royale Charity Affair for the second year in a row. Thanks to the generosity of



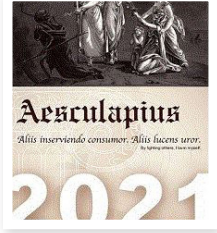
Casino Royale was instead celebrated with an online auction featuring the exciting auction collection created for the Casino Royale in-person event.

We are beyond grateful that despite the challenges in canceling the in-person Casino Royale yet another year, there are amazing sponsors, businesses, and donors who nonetheless generously supported our cause, raising nearly \$34,000 in net proceeds. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

We look forward to seeing you in person on Saturday, October 1, 2022, when we celebrate the 10th Annual Casino Royale Charity Affair!



MANUSCRIPT PUBLICATION | Congratulations to Jeremy Kudrna MD, Eric Habbe MD, Andrea Bordewyk MD, Hadly Carson Eisenbeisz MD, Ryan Scarborough OD, and Terrence Spencer MD, on publication of *“Evaluation of the SPOT™ Photoscreener’s Efficacy for Detecting Amblyopia Risk Factors Compared to Optometrists’ Examinations in 305 South Dakota Children”* in *Aesculapius*, the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine (USDSSM) journal. This is the fifth in a series of manuscripts published through a collaboration with NPEF, USDSSM student researchers, and area ophthalmologists and optometrists.



VOLUNTEERS HONORED | Over 30 passionate volunteers were honored at our annual summer Volunteer Picnic & Salute. Congratulations to: Dick Fischer, Volunteer of the Year, Piedmont Valley Lions (at right, accepting his award from Dr. Ryan Scarborough, NPEF Board Chair); Darryl & Arlene Moll, Volunteer Couple of the Year, Metro Lions; and Metro Lions, Club of the Year. In memoriam, we give a loving tribute to Arlene Moll who passed away October 10, 2021.



SCHOLARSHIP AWARD | Evan Meyer was presented the 2021 NPEF Dr. Paul L. Zimmerman Memorial Scholarship Endowment Award. Evan is a native of Sioux Falls and member of the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine Class of 2022. He describes ophthalmology as a “natural fit,” and is looking forward to the opportunity to guide future patients through his chosen field of service, continuing to develop new skills in a rapidly evolving field, and carrying on his passion for volunteerism.



GIFT OF SIGHT | NPEF, along with area ophthalmologists and optometrists and Gift of Sight program partners, Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired and Wyoming Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, provides sight-saving surgeries to low-income adults with severely impaired vision. 90 surgeries have been performed to date, helping recipients regain their vision, independence, and livelihood. At left is recent Gift of Sight recipient, Pamela Penfield, and surgeon, Dr. Gail Bernard.



VISIONCARE | It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas at Independent Optical, Wright Vision Center/Slingsby & Huot Eye Associates/Your Eyes Only Optical, The Eye Doctors at Rapid City Medical Center & Courtesy Subaru! These businesses are displaying donation forms to raise funds for VisionCARE to provide eye exams and glasses for low income individuals. Donate at these businesses or call NPEF at (605) 716-6733 to make a credit card donation!



Yes! I want to support NPEF’s mission.

NAME: _____ PHONE: (____) _____
 Cell Home Work

ADDRESS: _____
(Street or PO Box) (City) (State) (ZIP)

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____ I WANT TO DONATE: \$ _____

My Check is Enclosed (payable to NPEF) Contact Me at the Number Above for My Credit Card Information

Please place this completed form, along with your check, if applicable, in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

Thank you for your generous support of our cause.



With Deepest Appreciation to **Our Donors**

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