



Our vision is to preserve a lifetime of sight for all Georgians, especially children, seniors, and those unable to access eye care, through vision screenings, eye exams, and education.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SECOND LEADING CAUSE OF BLINDNESS CAN STRIKE AT ANY AGE

In Rare Cases, Children and Teenagers May Have the Disease

Atlanta, GA (January 22, 2009) – This January, for National Glaucoma Awareness Month, Prevent Blindness Georgia is spreading the word about one of the most frightening eye diseases affecting men and women throughout Atlanta and the state of Georgia. Often referred to as the “sneak thief of sight,” because half of all patients who have the disease do not know it, glaucoma currently affects more than 2.2 million – almost one in 50 – Americans age 40 and older.

Though this potentially-blinding disease is most commonly found in the elderly, glaucoma has been known to prey on those in the early stages of life, like 35 year-old Tracie Holloway of Riverdale, Ga., who was 21 when she was diagnosed.

Holloway, who wore glasses as a child but showed no signs of the disease until her junior year of college, was diagnosed with glaucoma after she began to experience severe headaches.

“I was diagnosed during an annual routine vision screening,” said Holloway, now a Technical Project Manager for Verizon Telecom. “The optometrist said that my eye pressure was high in both eyes and referred me to an ophthalmologist to confirm her diagnosis that I had glaucoma.”

“I was very surprised, even in denial, that I had this eye disease.”

Dr. Scott Pastor, a veteran of the Georgia medical community with Eye Consultants of Atlanta, has seen first-hand the effect that glaucoma can have on its victims.

The disease, which slowly causes loss of sight by damaging a part of the optic nerve, begins to affect peripheral vision in its early stages. Without treatment, central vision

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Prevent Blindness Georgia Provides Free Resources on Glaucoma

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then becomes diminished. Currently the second leading cause of blindness, behind only cataracts, glaucoma poses the greatest risk to African Americans over the age of 40, Mexican Americans over the age of 60 and those with a family history of the disease.

“The sad fact is that too many people are in danger of losing vision because they think they’re not at risk,” said Pastor, who also serves on the Prevent Blindness Georgia Board of Directors. “Glaucoma can affect anyone, from newborn babies to senior citizens, but a simple, painless eye exam can detect the disease. With early detection and continuing treatment, glaucoma can usually be controlled and blindness prevented.”

“The tragedy,” added Pastor, “is that 90 percent of the more than 80,000 Americans who are blind as a result of glaucoma did not have to lose their sight.”

That is why Prevent Blindness Georgia has joined other leading eye care groups in designating January as National Glaucoma Awareness Month in an effort to educate the public on the disease.

Prevent Blindness Georgia offers free informational resources, including treatment options and general information through its Web site or via phone. “The Glaucoma Learning Center,” at www.preventblindness.org/glaucoma, contains a variety of resources including an adult vision risk assessment and an interactive guide on how to use eye drops. The Web site also includes “The Glaucoma Web Discussion Forum” that allows patients and caregivers the opportunity to discuss online all subjects related to the disease.

Prevent Blindness Georgia also offers free printed materials including the “Guide for People with Glaucoma.” This comprehensive booklet serves as a handbook for patients and includes information on what to expect during treatment and even a list of questions to ask the eye doctor.

And, Prevent Blindness Georgia offers a free resource directory for those who may require financial assistance or may have questions about Medicare coverage for glaucoma. Consumers can obtain free printed materials on glaucoma in either English or Spanish by calling 404-266-2020 or by visiting www.pbga.org.

About Prevent Blindness Georgia

Prevent Blindness Georgia was founded in 1965 as the state affiliate of Prevent Blindness America, the nation’s leading volunteer eye health and safety organization. Its mission is to prevent blindness and preserve sight for the residents of Georgia through vision screenings for children and adults, eye exams and glasses for indigent seniors, the homeless, and working poor adults, public education on eye health and safety to persons at risk for eye disease, and vision screening training. To donate to the good work of Prevent Blindness Georgia, visit www.pbga.org.

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