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PHOTO CAPTION: From left to right, Prevent Blindness Ohio Research Fellows Elizabeth McDonald and Corrie Ziegler, Fifth Third Bank Vice President and Foundation Office Manager, Heidi Jark, and Research Fellows Dianne Henry, Amy Long and Jennifer Stanke.

VISION RESEARCH SCIENTIFIC FORUM

Features projects from some of Ohio's most talented young scientists

Columbus, Ohio – A *Vision Research Scientific Forum* featuring presentations from winners of Prevent Blindness Ohio's Young Investigator Student Fellowship Awards for Female Scholars in Vision Research was held on Thursday, November 9, 2006. President and Foundation Office Manager Heidi Jark attended the event, representing the Charlotte R. Schmidlapp Fund of the Fifth Third Bank Foundation. The Cincinnati-based foundation was one of the funders of the program. The Scientific Forum was co-sponsored by Ohio's Aging Eye Public Private Partnership.

The Forum's Keynote Speaker, Pamela B. Davis, M.D., Interim Dean of Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine said, "encouraging women to pursue careers in scientific research will be critical to the future of health care and the quality of life in America. In the next ten years—as the baby boomers age and retire—scientific research fields including vision research, stand to lose over 50% of their scientists. Females and minorities are particularly underrepresented in scientific research careers."

Prevent Blindness Ohio's Young Investigator Student Fellowship Awards for Female Scholars in Vision Research is designed to encourage female scientists at the beginning of their careers to pursue vision research that can contribute toward the early detection and treatment discoveries that will be needed to curb the growth of vision loss in Ohio due to the four leading causes of blindness – age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma, cataract and diabetic retinopathy.

Prevent Blindness Ohio made its first round of six fellowship grants through its new research program to students at The Ohio State University, Case Western Reserve University and the

University of Cincinnati in June. The young researchers supported this past summer worked on projects that will have future impact on preventing corneal infections, contact lens safety, dry eye, early detection of glaucoma, regeneration of retinal cells responsible for age-related macular degeneration, and the impact of nutrition on vision preservation.

“With the aging baby boomer population and lack of affordable health care for many in the United States and Ohio, the number of blind and visually impaired is expected to double by the year 2030. More than 2.5 million Ohioans will be affected. Based on the estimation in the doubling of vision loss over the next three decades and figuring an annual inflation rate of 3%, the cost of visual disorders and disabilities in Ohio can reach over \$9.4 billion annually by the year 2030!” said Marc Cloutier, Special Assistant for Biotechnology, Ohio Department of Development and co-chair of Prevent Blindness Ohio Fellowship Selection Committee.

“For close to 100 years, our organization has served as the voluntary, nonprofit advocate for the public on vision related issues,” said Dr. Larry Leguire, Prevent Blindness Ohio Board Member and co-chair of its Fellowship Selection Committee. “But many may not know that we also provide research grants to those who are working to find the causes of and cures for vision loss. With the doubling of aging eye diseases in the next two decades, the need for research to find the causes of and cures for vision loss has never been greater. Early detection and prevention are key in our fight to preserve healthy sight for a lifetime.”

To apply for the 2007 Young Investigator Student Fellowship Awards for Female Scholars in Vision Research, log on to: www.preventblindness.org/Ohio/research_award.html.

The Award Program is supported by a grant from the Charlotte R. Schmidlapp Fund of the Fifth Third Bank Foundation, Trustee and the Sarah E. Slack Prevention of Blindness Fund, Muskingum County Community Foundation.

ABOUT PREVENT BLINDNESS OHIO

Prevent Blindness Ohio, founded in 1957, is Ohio’s leading volunteer, nonprofit public health organization dedicated to preventing blindness and preserving sight. It serves all 88 Ohio counties, providing direct services to more than 800,000 Ohioans annually and educating millions of consumers about what they can do to protect and preserve their precious gift of sight. Prevent Blindness Ohio is an affiliate of Prevent Blindness America, the country’s second-oldest national voluntary health organization. For more information or to make a contribution, visit our website at www.pbohio.org or call 800-301-2020.

ABOUT OHIO’S AGING EYE PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

The Aging Eye Public/Private Partnership is an initiative supported by the Ohio Department of Aging whose mission is to develop a strategic plan of action to address issues relating to vision care public policy, vision care services, vision education, and vision research that impact the quality of life for Ohio’s seniors now and in the future. The formation of the Partnership and its on-going work is supported by a Proclamation from the Governor of Ohio. Visit www.preventblindness.org/ohio/agingeye for more information.