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**PREVENT BLINDNESS AMERICA NAMES SCIENTIST AT MIAMI UNIVERSITY AS
WINNER OF FOURTH ANNUAL INVESTIGATOR AWARD**

Vision Research is Key to Preventing Unnecessary Vision Loss

(COLUMBUS, OH) (August 9, 2007) – Prevent Blindness Ohio and Prevent Blindness America announced the recipients of the 2007 Investigator Awards. Groundbreaking and exciting research grants were given to three institutions: Miami University, Casey Eye Institute of Oregon Health & Science University and the University of California, Berkeley.

After reviewing hundreds of applications, the award recipients were selected by a team of scientists who are members of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO).

Katia Del Rio-Tsonis, Ph.D. at Ohio's Miami University received an Investigator Award for her project "The Use of Human Retinal Stem Cells for Retina Repair." The research will explore the potential use of adult human retinal stem cells for retinal repair and regeneration. The results could be used towards therapies for major causes of blindness including macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and retinitis pigmentosa.

"Our research found that the annual costs associated with adult vision problems in the United States are estimated at \$51.4 billion," said Sherill K. Williams, President & CEO, Prevent Blindness Ohio. "As troubling as that number is, what's even more concerning is that by the year 2030, the number of blind and visually impaired is expected to double. Our continued support of research initiatives brings hope to the millions that are threatened by vision loss."

For close to 100 years, Prevent Blindness America has been dedicated to programs and research initiatives that aim to prevent vision loss. The Prevent Blindness America Investigator Award program was created to assist pioneers in vision health in their quest to save sight.

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Dr. Del Rio-Tsonis commented, "Receipt of this grant will help me pursue important research towards treatments for many retina diseases affecting millions of Americans. Thank you Prevent Blindness America for this wonderful opportunity."

"Because of dedicated individuals in the research field, we can continue to discover new and exciting ways to treat eye diseases that can threaten our quality of life," added Williams, Prevent Blindness Ohio. "We urge everyone to support their efforts in order to help preserve the precious gift of sight."

For more information on the Prevent Blindness America Investigator Awards, or for free information on various eye diseases and conditions, please call Prevent Blindness Ohio at 1-800-301-2020 or visit www.pbohio.org.

About Prevent Blindness Ohio

Prevent Blindness Ohio is celebrating 50 years as Ohio's leading volunteer nonprofit public health organization dedicated to preventing blindness and preserving sight. Founded in 1957 by U.S. Senator John Bricker and Lion's Club Member, Bob Morrison with support from Nationwide, the Ohio Department of Health and Delta Gamma Fraternity, PBO serves all 88 Ohio counties. We provide direct services to more than 800,000 Ohioans annually and educate 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**

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