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For more information:
Andrea Albanese
800-301-2020- ext. 119

DELEGATES SELECTED FOR PREVENT BLINDNESS OHIO'S THIRD ANNUAL EYES ON CAPITOL HILL EVENT

COLUMBUS – Individuals from Ohio will travel to Washington D.C. to share their personal experiences with Congressional leaders during the “Eyes on Capitol Hill” campaign on February 12-14, 2008. Six delegates were chosen to testify on behalf of Prevent Blindness Ohio about the importance of healthy vision after a nationwide search and review of hundreds of applications. Eyes on Capitol Hill will give Ohioans affected by vision challenges a chance to share their stories as well as advocate for support of effective public health policies involving eye health and safety.

One delegate, Megan Wombacker from Kent, Ohio, has a sister who suffered from a serious vision impairment as a preschooler. Megan says, “As she developed her fine motor skills, my family noticed delays and implications with her sight. My sister spent the first four years of her life with nearly no vision at all! It is extremely devastating to know that her physical, mental, and social disorders could have been prevented by eye care. Luckily, the doctor caught her disadvantage when he did. I could only imagine what would have happened if she had become blind.”

Megan, a graduate student at Kent State University pursuing a Masters of Business Administration degree, will be competing for Miss Ohio in June. She is using her title as a platform for educating the state and nation about the importance of vision preservation awareness.

Other members of the Ohio delegation are as follows:

Laura and Kylie Glass, Alliance
Richard and June Russell, Seven Hills
Rick Bunner, Zanesville

The Eyes on Capitol Hill Campaign is designed to give constituents who have been affected by vision loss an opportunity to discuss vision issues with their respective government representatives and to build the membership of the Congressional Vision Caucus (CVC). The Congressional Vision Caucus is a bipartisan coalition of over 100 congressional members co-chaired by Ohio Congressman Patrick J. Tiberi. Other Ohio Members of Congress serving on the CVC include Representatives Mike Turner (Dayton), Deborah Pryce (Columbus), Zach Space (Dover), Marcy Kaptur (Toledo) and Senator Sherrod Brown.

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“As we face a period of economic slowdown, we need to educate our nation’s leaders on the importance of cost-effective funding for vision care programs and initiatives,” said Sherill Williams, President and CEO of Prevent Blindness Ohio. “Half of all blindness is preventable but our citizens must have access to those blindness prevention services.”

Vision care expenses continue to skyrocket. In fact, according to a recent study from Prevent Blindness America, the annual estimated cost associated with adult vision diseases in the United States is \$51.4 billion. That figure includes both direct and indirect costs associated with the most common forms of vision impairments such as age-related macular degeneration (AMD), cataract, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and refractive error.

For more information on Eyes on Capitol Hill or other vision topics, please call Prevent Blindness Ohio at 800-301-2020 or visit www.pbohio.org.

Prevent Blindness Ohio, founded in 1957, is Ohio’s leading volunteer nonprofit public health organization dedicated to preventing blindness and preserving sight. We serve 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.

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