



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 2, 2009

For more information:
Kira Baldonado
800-301-2020 ext. 106

OHIO DELEGATES MEET WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS
Prevent Blindness Ohio Celebrates the
Fourth Annual “Eyes on Capitol Hill” Campaign

COLUMBUS, OH – Prevent Blindness Ohio and Prevent Blindness America, the nation’s leading volunteer eye health and safety organization, celebrated the success of the fourth annual “Eyes on Capitol Hill” campaign which was held from March 2 through March 4, in Washington, DC.

The Ohio delegates joined more than 70 other participants from across the country to meet with congressional and senate members and their staff to discuss vision care issues. The national program was developed to allow Americans to meet with our nation’s leaders to discuss their vision challenges and to educate and empower the participants to become advocates in their own state.

“We were thrilled to be able to have members of our own community represent our state in this important event,” said Sherill K. Williams, President and CEO of Prevent Blindness Ohio. “We want our policymakers to see first-hand how the decisions they make about vision care funding and programs impact their own constituents.”

Ohio delegates included: Greg Gardener, Cincinnati; Sandy Sommers, North Canton; and Kira Baldonado, Columbus.

“We would like to sincerely thank all of our Ohio delegates who passionately shared their stories with us and our government leaders,” added Williams. “We would also like to thank Ohio Senators Sherrod Brown and George Voinovich and Representatives Steve Driehaus, Tim Ryan, John Boccieri, Mary Jo Kilroy, and Stephen LaTourette and their staffs for visiting with our advocates and making the event possible.”

“Vision loss isn’t just something that happens to others, it’s happening to our friends, neighbors, family and even ourselves,” added Williams. “As we enter in a period of potential economic slowdown, we need to educate our nation’s leaders on the importance of cost-effective funding for vision care programs and initiatives. Half of all blindness is preventable but our citizens must have access to those blindness prevention services. We want to continue educating Congress on the positive impact that vision loss prevention programs can not only have on patients, but our state and our national healthcare system.”

-MORE-

Page 2

Vision loss is a growing problem- the number of blind and visually impaired is expected to double by the year 2030 if nothing is done to address the problem. Furthermore, it is estimated that the economic impact of visual disorders and disabilities costs the U.S. approximately \$51.4 billion annually.

Of the 130 million Americans aged 40 and older, more than 30 million suffer from leading causes of vision loss such as cataract, diabetic retinopathy, macular degeneration and glaucoma, according to the newly revised edition of the "Vision Problems in the U.S." study. In fact, in Ohio, 945,043 have already been diagnosed with cataracts, 93,852 with glaucoma and 171,467 with diabetic retinopathy.

Prevent Blindness Ohio is already looking forward to next year's "Eyes on Capitol Hill" campaign and hopes to expand the number of patient advocates and raise awareness among Ohio's federal lawmakers about the importance and effectiveness of vision programs.

For more information on Eyes on Capitol Hill or on how you can contact your state representative to ask for their support on vision-related issues, please visit www.pbohio.org or call 800-301-2020.

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. For more information or to make a contribution, visit our website at www.pbohio.org or call 800-301-2020.



Sandy Sommers of North Canton and Gregory Gardner of Cincinnati, Ohio advocates for vision as a part of the 2009 Eyes on Capitol Hill event organized by Prevent Blindness America.

###