



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Aging Eye Symposium Educates Seniors to Preserve Their Sight for Years of Active Living

More than 130 participants attended the Aging Eye Symposium hosted by Prevent Blindness Tennessee in collaboration with the Tennessee Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, on Friday, April 7, 2006. The free vision symposium, designed for seniors and professionals who work with seniors, was presented to raise awareness about the vision problems affecting Tennessee's aging population.

The one-day symposium featured presentations by eye care professionals who specialize in age-related eye diseases, which are the leading causes of vision loss in seniors. During the morning session Barbara Odes, O.D. spoke about vision acuity and cataracts, Rachel Kuchtey, M.D., Ph.D. talked about glaucoma and Brad Kehler, O.D. presented on diabetic retinopathy. The afternoon session included a presentation concerning low vision by Kristin Anderson, O.D. and age-related macular degeneration by Eric Kostamaa, M.D. Additionally, participants visited exhibit booths and received information about eye healthcare, a free vision screening and lunch was provided.

"We are pleased with the turnout at our first Aging Eye Symposium," said Jeane Ostenfeld, PBT Director of Programs. "The speakers were dynamic and the attendees received valuable information about how to preserve their sight for years of active living."

State Representative Edith Langster was also on hand to present a joint resolution by the House and Senate to recognize January as Glaucoma Awareness Month in Tennessee. Langster told the crowd of seniors that glaucoma runs in her family and is very prevalent among African Americans. "Glaucoma affects African Americans six to eight times more frequently than Caucasians," she said. Langster urged everyone to take care of their sight by having regular eye examinations.

The need for increased awareness of vision loss and prevention is prevalent throughout the state. In Tennessee, more than 20,000 people over age 40 are blind, and many other Tennesseans over 40 have vision problems that could lead to blindness; 65,000 are vision impaired, 413,000 have cataracts, 45,000 have glaucoma, 107,000 experience diabetic retinopathy and 32,000 have age-related macular degeneration. Those numbers are estimated to double by the year 2030 as baby boomers live longer and the aging population increases. For more information about age-related eye diseases contact Prevent Blindness Tennessee at 615/352-0450 or visit the website at www.preventblindnesstn.org.

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Established in 1978, Prevent Blindness Tennessee is a non-profit organization dedicated to preventing blindness and preserving sight across the state of Tennessee through vision screenings, public and professional education, community services, programs, referrals, information, and research. We serve thousands of adults and tens of thousands of children each year. We Keep the SEE in TennesSEE!