



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 6, 2009

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PBT OFFERS RETINAL SCREENINGS TO PREVENT BLINDNESS IN HIGH-RISK DIABETICS

Prevent Blindness Tennessee (PBT), the state's leading voluntary eye health organization, has expanded its adult vision services to offer diabetic patients in low income and medically underserved areas of Middle Tennessee ready access to retinal screening examinations, prevention education and treatment of diabetic retinopathy—a vision threatening eye disease linked to diabetes. Prevent Blindness Tennessee's "Operation DRIP" (Diabetic Retinopathy Intervention Program) is an initiative funded by Baptist Healing Trust, HCA, and the Memorial Foundation with support from the Tennessee Academy of Ophthalmology and Tennessee Optometric Association.

"Due to significant health disparities, less than half of all patients with diabetes receive needed eye examinations despite the fact that primary care providers often recommend that diabetic patients seek a thorough exam from an eye care specialist," said Jennifer Gamble, PBT President and CEO. "Patient factors that contribute to this neglect are many, but include lack of understanding about diabetic complications and problems associated with healthcare delivery.

Operation DRIP is designed to address healthcare disparities within the state by offering diabetic patients who don't have access to eye health care an acceptable alternative to help save their sight.”

The Siloam Center in Nashville is one of the first social service agencies to receive services through Operation DRIP. Diabetic patients there received non-mydratic (non-dilated) retinal screening exams from PBT staff using a digital fundus camera to capture high-resolution images of the retina. The image covers an area of about 45 degrees and shows the blood vessels, nerves and important physiological structures such as the macular and optic disc. If the retinal scan indicates a problem, PBT facilitates a referral for the patient to see an eye care specialist for further evaluation.

More than 87,000 Tennesseans age 40 and older suffer from diabetic retinopathy. Diabetic retinopathy harms blood vessels in the eye and if left untreated can cause severe vision loss or blindness. For more information about diabetic retinopathy and Operation DRIP, 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 voluntary eye health 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.