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PREVENT BLINDNESS AMERICA RELEASES REPORT DETAILING ACTIVITIES OF KEY PUBLIC HEALTH COLLABORATION

CHICAGO (Oct. 26, 2009) –Prevent Blindness America, the nation’s oldest volunteer eye health and safety organization, recently released a summary report of a five-year cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This report, entitled *Prevent Blindness America: Working to Advance Public Health, Vision and Eye Care in the U.S.*, summarizes key efforts of the first stage of this public-private partnership, focusing on activities taking place between 2003 and 2008.

An estimated 80 million people have a potentially vision impairing eye disease. Without efforts to prevent vision problems that number is expected to double by 2030. To address this need, in 2005 the CDC, under its Vision Health Initiative, entered a collaborative partnership with Prevent Blindness America to address vision loss and related eye diseases. From this joint effort, more effective public health programs have been created to address vision and eye health needs across the country as well as to establish an ongoing infrastructure of prevention functions that will continue to have a substantial impact on the nation’s vision and eye health in the future.

With a grant award totaling approximately \$5.4 million, Prevent Blindness America was able to undertake key vision preservation and vision-loss initiatives, including:

- State-based programs aimed at detecting and treating vision problems.
- Efforts to ensure appropriate follow-up care to vision screening programs.
- Development of a national data collection system.
- Establishment of crucial ongoing partnerships with public health organizations such as the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors.
- Public education through state-based vision symposia.
- Implementing strategies to integrate vision and eye health into state public system.
- Expansion of programs to new territories throughout the country.

This work was conducted largely with the support and involvement of many of Prevent Blindness America’s state-based affiliates across the country. States represented include: Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin and Virginia.

Due to the success of the partnership, in 2008 the CDC entered into a new agreement with Prevent Blindness America to fund the non-profit organization’s “National Vision

Preservation Initiative,” an effort to develop an integrative approach to eye health promotion and vision loss prevention.

The new 3-year cooperative agreement, which includes an approximate \$3 million grant to Prevent Blindness America involves several participating organizations: Duke Clinical Research Institute, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, New York State Department of Health, Prevent Blindness North Carolina, Prevent Blindness Ohio and Prevent Blindness Tri-State.

The National Vision Preservation Initiative is currently funding evaluations of adult vision health programs at community health clinics in Ohio, as well as a pediatric-focused effort in North Carolina. Additionally, a statewide vision integration program is underway in partnership with the New York State Health Department and a new comprehensive national database for clinical and public health data related to vision and eye health is under development.

“It is imperative that we have partnerships with institutions like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in order to address the ever growing needs of our country’s population. This partnership allows our organization to continue to carry out our mission to promote vision and eye health, and safety,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. “We are excited to be able to continue our important work with the CDC and know that this partnership will show a significant impact on vision health.”

Prevent Blindness America: Working to Advance Public Health, Vision and Eye Care in the U.S. can be found at www.preventblindness.net/CDC_summary. For more information on vision and eye health, contact Prevent Blindness America at (800) 331-2020 or visit preventblindness.org.

About Prevent Blindness America

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, divisions and chapters, Prevent Blindness America is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call (800) 331-2020 or visit us on the Web at preventblindness.org.

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