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For more information:
Prevent Blindness America
Sarah Hecker
(312) 363-6035

**PREVENT BLINDNESS AMERICA SELECTS LOCAL
DELEGATES FOR FOURTH ANNUAL
EYES ON CAPITOL HILL NATIONAL EVENT**

Residents of Evanston and Palatine, Ill. Chosen to Participate

CHICAGO (Feb. 25, 2009) – Prevent Blindness America, the nation’s leading volunteer eye health and safety organization, is pleased to announce that two applicants from Illinois have been selected as delegates for the fourth annual “Eyes on Capitol Hill” campaign to be held in Washington, DC. Sandra H. Farrow and Anthony DeGeorge will join 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 event will be held March 2-4, 2009.

Through a nationwide search for applicants, adults and children whose lives have been impacted by either eye disease or eye injuries were selected. The goal of the program is to demonstrate to our nation’s leaders the importance of vision care funding initiatives. Specifically, Eyes on Capitol Hill advocates will ask congressional and senate members to increase funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Vision Health Initiative and to join the Congressional Vision Caucus (CVC). The CVC is a bicameral and bipartisan coalition of more than 100 Congressional Members focused on vision research, prevention/public health programs, and access to treatment and rehabilitation.

Illinois delegates include Sandra H. Farrow of Evanston, who is going to Washington to speak to her representatives about the toll that the damaging effects of glaucoma has had on the lives of several of her family members, including her mother, brother and sister.

“Education and awareness among family members and the community are of paramount importance,” said Farrow. “My family and I didn't know anything about the seriousness of glaucoma when my brother was diagnosed. My brother now has a very advanced case and is expected to go blind. He is losing this battle, will one day be required to stop working and is very challenged to remain in a position to live an independent life.”

Also participating from Illinois is Anthony DeGeorge of Palatine. DeGeorge is also a glaucoma patient and was diagnosed at the young age of 13. Thanks to early detection and treatment including medications and surgery, at age 27, he now only requires daily eye drops.

DeGeorge hopes to explain to his congressmen that “I would be blind by now if my eye doctor decided to not go through with a pressure test when I was 13. We need to make Congress aware of how serious glaucoma is and most of all how easy it is to prevent vision loss if diagnosed and treated properly.”

Of the 130 million Americans aged 40 and older, more than 30 million suffer from leading causes of vision loss such as cataract, glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and diabetic retinopathy, according to the newly revised edition of the Prevent Blindness America’s “Vision Problems in the U.S.” study. In fact, in Illinois alone, 942,405 have already been diagnosed with cataracts, close to 100,000 with glaucoma, more than 90,000 with AMD and close to 188,000 with diabetic retinopathy.

“As our healthcare system faces the effects of the broader economic downturn, it is critical that we make sure our representatives are aware of the impact that vision loss can have,” added Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. “Our nation spends at least \$51.4 billion a year on the costs of age-related eye disease alone. We want to stress the need for public access to preventive services and vision health 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, call 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, it's 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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