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

Resident of Overland Park, Kan. 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 an applicant from Kansas has been selected as a delegate for the fourth annual “Eyes on Capitol Hill” campaign to be held in Washington, DC. Lauren Hoover of Overland Park, Kan. 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 the 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.

Hoover will be going to Washington to speak to her representatives about her experience with vision impairment. At age 21, she suffers from severe myopia (nearsightedness), macular degeneration, severely thin corneas and retinal detachment.

“I believe vision preservation should start in the classroom. Poor vision is a disability that cannot always be corrected fully and I believe there should be legislation in place and allocated funds to teach proper eye health,” said Hoover. “I want to send the message to Congress that prevention of vision loss needs to start when children are young. Some of the worst cases start early and progress rapidly, such as mine.”

According to the National Eye Institute, nationwide, two to five percent of children ages three to five have amblyopia, three to four percent have strabismus, and 10-15 percent have significant refractive error. Additionally, vision problems can negatively impact learning and school performance, as 80 percent of learning in young children is done visually.

“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. “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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