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FIRST SYMPOSIUM TO PLAN STRATEGY AGAINST IMPENDING VISION LOSS CRISIS IN ILLINOIS

CHICAGO (Sept. 20, 2006) – The Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness (ISPB) and Prevent Blindness America, the nation’s leading volunteer eye health and safety organization, both based in Chicago, will be hosting an educational seminar designed to raise awareness about the prevalence of age-related vision issues and its implications for public health among the aging Illinois population. The 2006 Illinois Vision Symposium- Understanding the Aging Eye will be held on Oct. 31, 2006 at the Chicago Cultural Center from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. (CT).

More than 1 million Illinois residents aged 40 and older are living with one of four major age-related eye diseases, (glaucoma, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy and age-related macular degeneration). And due to the large population of aging baby boomers, the number of those who will be diagnosed with some form of blinding eye disease will continue to rise.

“The number of blind and visually impaired people is expected to double by the year 2030,” said Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of Prevent Blindness America. “We hope that by bringing together those who are dedicated to saving sight, we can begin to develop a real plan to put an end to preventable vision loss.”

At the event, speakers will discuss both the cause of the diseases as well as current treatments and supportive therapy. An expected outcome will be the formation of an ongoing Illinois Vision Coalition to address aging eye issues through education, vision screening, access to services, policy, research, and consumer support mechanisms.

“We hope that the success of the symposium will serve as a model for these kinds of collaborative efforts in the future for other states,” said James A. McKechnie, Jr., executive director of ISPB.

Registration is free and all those with an interest in the impact of age-related eye disease on Illinois residents are invited to attend. Professionals who work with both middle-aged and older adult clients and patients, as well as those working directly in vision loss prevention, are encouraged to attend.

For more information on the 2006 Illinois Vision Symposium- Understanding the Aging Eye, or to register by phone, please call 1-800-331-2020 or 1-800-433-4772. To register online, please visit www.preventblindness.net/symposium.

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Illinois Symposium Held to Strategize Against Preventable Vision Loss

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About The Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness

The Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness (ISPB) was founded in 1916 to prevent needless blindness. Dedicated to the care, protection and preservation of sight, ISPB programs stress education, information, eye safety and research.

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, certified vision screening programs, advocacy, 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 1-800-331-2020 or visit us on the Web at www.preventblindness.org.

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