

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

PREVENT BLINDNESS AMERICA ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF FOURTH ANNUAL INVESTIGATOR AWARDS

Vision Research is Key to Preventing Unnecessary Vision Loss

CHICAGO (July 24, 2007) – Prevent Blindness America, the nation’s oldest eye health and safety organization has announced the recipients of the 2007 Prevent Blindness America Investigator Awards. Groundbreaking and exciting research grants were given to three institutions: Casey Eye Institute of Oregon Health & Science University, Miami University and the University of California, Berkeley.

After reviewing hundreds of applications, the award recipients were selected by a team of scientists who are members of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO).

For close to 100 years, Prevent Blindness America has been dedicated to programs and research initiatives that aim to prevent vision loss. The Prevent Blindness America Investigator Award program was created to assist pioneers in vision health in their quest to save sight.

“Our research found that the annual costs associated with adult vision problems in the United States are estimated at \$51.4 billion,” said Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of Prevent Blindness America. “As troubling as that number is, what’s even more concerning is that by the year 2030, the number of blind and visually impaired is expected to double. Our continued support of research initiatives brings hope to the millions that are threatened by vision loss.”

Glaucoma is a leading cause of blindness around the world, yet as many as half of all people with glaucoma may not know they have it. Mary J. Kelley, Ph.D., at the Casey Eye Institute of Oregon Health & Science University, has received the Prevent Blindness America Investigator Award for her research project entitled “Molecular Markers of Trabecular Meshwork Stem Cells.” The study seeks to explore innovative methods of controlling or lowering intraocular pressure in glaucoma patients.

Katia Del Rio-Tsonis, Ph.D. at Ohio’s Miami University also received an Investigator Award for her project “The Use of Human Retinal Stem Cells for Retina Repair.” The research will explore the potential use of adult human retinal stem cells for retinal repair and regeneration. The results could be used towards therapies for major causes of blindness including macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and retinitis pigmentosa.

-More-

Prevent Blindness America Announces Winners of 2007 Investigator Awards

Page 2

In 2006, Prevent Blindness America awarded Marilyn E. Schneck, Ph.D., at the University of California, Berkeley, with the Investigator Award for her project: "Objective Assessment of Retinal Function in Adolescents with Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes." The study will continue to be funded in an effort to characterize changes in vision in adolescents with the disease.

"Because of dedicated individuals in the research field, we can continue to discover new and exciting ways to treat eye diseases that can threaten our quality of life," added Garrett. "We urge everyone to support their efforts in order to help preserve the precious gift of sight."

For more information on the Prevent Blindness America Investigator Awards, or for free information on various eye diseases and conditions, please call Prevent Blindness America at 1-800-331-2020 or visit www.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, 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.

###